

OCTOBER 1912

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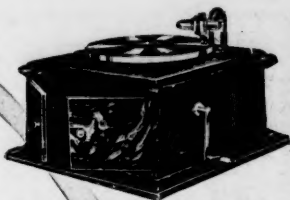
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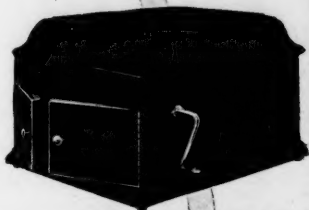
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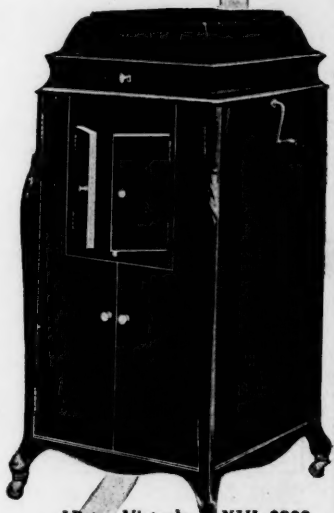
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Vol. XVI

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

No. 1

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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WARNING—Do not subscribe through agents unknown to you personally. Complaints
 reach us daily from victims of such swindlers.



WE INVITE EVERY THIN MAN AND WOMAN HERE

EVERY READER OF THIS MAGAZINE TO GET FAT AT OUR EXPENSE

This is an invitation that no thin man or woman can afford to ignore. We'll tell you why. We are going to give you a wonderful discovery that helps digest the foods you eat—that puts good, solid flesh on people who are thin and under-weight, no matter what the cause may be—that makes brain in five hours and blood in four—that puts the red corpuscles in the blood which every thin man or woman so sadly needs. How can we do this? We will tell you. Science has discovered a remarkable concentrated treatment which increases cell growth, the very substance of which our bodies are made—a treatment that makes indigestion and other stomach troubles disappear as if by magic and makes an old dyspeptic or a sufferer from weak nerves or lack of vitality feel like a 2-year-old. This new treatment, which has proved a boon to every thin person, is called Sargol. Don't forget the name—"S-A-R-G-O-L." Nothing like it has ever been produced before. It is a revelation to women who have never been able to appear stylish in anything they wore because of their thinness. It is a godsend to every man who is under weight or is lacking in nerve force or energy. If you want a beautiful and well-rounded figure of symmetrical proportions, of which you can feel justly proud—if you want a body full of throbbing life and energy, write The Sargol Company, 300-X Herald Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y., today and we will send you, absolutely free, a 50c box of Sargol that will prove all we claim. Take one with every meal, and in five minutes after you take the first concentrated tablet of this precious product it will commence to unfold its virtues, and it has by actual demonstration often increased the weight at the rate of one pound a day. But you say you want proof! Well, here you are. Here is the statement of those who have tried—who have been convinced—and who will swear to the virtues of this marvelous preparation.

REV. GEORGE W. DAVIS says:

"I have made a faithful trial of the Sargol treatment and must say it has brought to me new life and vigor. I have gained twenty pounds and now weigh 150 pounds, and, what is better, I have gained the days of my boyhood. It has been the turning point of my life. My health is now fine. I don't have to take any medicine at all and never want to again."

MRS. A. I. RODENHEISER writes:

"I have gained immensely since I took Sargol, for I only weighed about 106 pounds when I began using it and now I weigh 130 pounds, so really this makes twenty-four pounds. I feel stronger and am looking better than ever before, and now I carry rosy cheeks, which is something I could never say before."

"My old friends who have been used to seeing me with a thin, long face, say that I am looking better than they have ever seen me before, and father and mother are so pleased to think I have got to look so well and weigh so heavy for me."

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"Please send me another ten-day treatment. I am well pleased with Sargol. It has been the light of my life. I am getting back to my proper weight again. When I began to take Sargol I only weighed 138 pounds, and now, four weeks later, I am weighing 153 pounds and feeling fine. I don't have that stupid feeling every morning that I used to have. I feel good all the time. I want to put on about five pounds of flesh and that will be all I want."

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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 16

OCTOBER, 1912

NUMBER 1

THE RENTED EARL

BY
EDWARD SALISBURY FIELD

Author of "The Sapphire Bracelet," etc.



ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. HARTING

CHAPTER I.

I REMEMBER his being pointed out to me at Monte Carlo. "That," said Gordon Lennox, at whose villa I was stopping, "is the Earl of Carmondale." Afterward I saw him frequently—dining at Ciro's, in the rooms of the *Circle Nautique*, a semiexclusive baccarat club, at the *Tir aux Pigeons*, on the terrace behind the casino. He must have been about twenty-eight at the time; slender, of medium height, with the drooping shoulders and curious walk that Cambridge men affect. Also, he was notoriously poor; but one thought that rather to his credit, for his title, one of the oldest in England, must have been listed in the matrimonial market at a high figure. And he had never married. Indeed, except for a distinguished air of boredom, the Earl of Carmondale seemed to be, and no doubt was, a normal, commonplace young

man; and though sometimes seen in the company of Cléro, the famous dancer, whose daring costumes made even the Riviera sit up, his attitude toward her was so patently that of good-natured tolerance that even the most outrageous gossips could see no harm in it.

You will be surprised, perhaps, that I should have had either the time or inclination to notice him. And truly, in a little principality where great ladies rub shoulders with *courtisanes*, where often the only means of telling the one from the other is a definite knowledge, where marquis and *maitre d'hôtel* watch the same whirling roulette ball from adjoining chairs—one might so easily have ignored his existence. That is, one might who didn't know Beamer. It was through Beamer that my attention became focused on the earl.

I can think of no better way to describe Beamer than as a "wide-awake American"; the man who invented the

expression certainly had Beamer in mind. To be a Beamer, it is not enough to say "come in" when Opportunity knocks at your door. Ah, no! A Beamer knocks at the door of Opportunity, and, in event of no answer, forces the lock. He possesses initiative in such quantity that it ceases to be a polite word. He is the kind to weep over a fancied slight, if weeping doesn't interfere with business; the kind to turn up smiling after being kicked downstairs, if business would suffer from a frown—a strange mixture of audacity and timidity, of humility and impudence. All this, of course, is treating him as a type. Concerning Beamer, the individual, I can be a bit more definite.

He was not at all imposing in appearance; save for a burning eye, a general air of excitement, and a complexion to make women envious, he was a picture to be skied in life's gallery and forgotten—if he let you. As regards age, he might have been twenty-six, he might have been forty. The strongest evidence I can offer on this point is, if twenty-six he had no business to be bald, which he most certainly was.

Our acquaintance began in New York. Persistent in his attentions from the first, he had ended by insuring my life for ten thousand dollars. I didn't want my life insured; I fought valiantly against it. But when a man spends all his time sitting on your doorstep, or popping round corners to wave mortality statistics in your face, what can one do? Or what won't one do to get rid of him?

I was—I recall it perfectly—sipping a very dark and bitter *apéritif* in front of the Café de Paris, and remarking the skill with which a singularly beautiful woman dripped water into her absinth, when a hand was laid on my shoulder, and a voice proclaimed: "Well, if this ain't a sight for sore eyes!" Turning, I beheld Beamer. My first impulse was to seek safety in flight, for I had allowed my insurance to lapse, and that Beamer could be in Monte Carlo for any other purpose than to reinsure my life never occurred to me.

"Talk of luck! You're just the man I'm looking for."

Shuddering at this ominous postscript to his greeting, I invited him to sit down.

We were both of us silent for a moment; I, because of a desolate feeling that anything I said might be used against me. I managed, however, to summon a waiter without committing myself, and, thus encouraged, I made so bold as to tell Beamer he was looking prosperous. This information seemed to please him.

"Bought 'em in London," he said, indicating his checked clothes. "Picked this stickpin up on Vigo Street; real pearls, and only seven shillings. Now, that's what I call a bargain. Here, have a look at it."

I took the scarfpin and examined it gravely.

"No end of a bargain," I assured him.

"When it comes to pearls, you can't fool yours truly. Say, the last time you saw me I was chasing life insurance, wasn't I? And here I am smelling about, as good as anybody. It's the limit, ain't it?"

"Then you are——"

"Sure, I am. No more life insurance for Archibald J. Beamer. It's a dub's game, honest. Though I did make some good friends by it," he added ingenuously.

I breathed a sigh of relief. Beamer, divorced from life insurance, might prove harmless, after all.

"This is what I call real handsome of you, Mr. Gatewood," he continued, as a waiter set a glass of lemonade at his elbow. "Too bad you haven't a title; if you had, I could put you in the way of making some easy money."

"We can't all be dukes and lords," I said.

"Speaking of lords reminds me; I want to meet the Earl of Carmondale, and I guess you're the right man to fix it for me."

"But, my dear Beamer!"

"I ain't expecting to get something for nothing, Mr. Gatewood. No, sir; that ain't my style. What do you say to twenty pounds?"

"You are willing to pay twenty pounds for the privilege of meeting the Earl of Carmondale?"

"Twenty to you, yes. I expect ten will turn the trick, though. I've come here on purpose to meet him, and I'll meet him, all right."

I believed him. Still, my curiosity was aroused. Why did this round-faced, bald-headed little man care to meet the Earl of Carmondale?

"If you won't do it for money, perhaps you will for friendship," said Beamer.

I shook my head.

"I haven't the honor of knowing his lordship," I replied.

"Will you be here long?"

"Another week, I think."

"Then I'll introduce you to him."

I smiled.

"Maybe you think I can't?"

"I'm sure you can."

"Don't you want to meet him?"

"I'd much rather know why you wish to meet him."

"I've a mind to tell you," said Beamer, "a good mind to tell you. This is in confidence, of course."

"Of course," I assented.

"It's the Star Booking Agency that's after him."

"Theatrical?"

"No; social."

"I don't think I understand."

"That's why I'm telling you. It's a new thing, and, man, there's a fortune in it!"

"For the Earl of Carmondale?"

"No, sir! For Archibald J. Beamer."

"But where does the earl come in?" I asked.

Beamer took a swallow of lemonade, then tucked his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets.

"The earl," said he, "is the bearded lady in the side show, he's Boscoe under contract, he's a two-spot—yes, that's it, he's a two-spot. And I," he swelled visibly, "I am the other fifty-one cards in the deck."

"Then you——"

"I am the Star Booking Agency. You see"—he favored me with a wink—"there's lots of people on the other side

that would pay a good round price for the privilege of entertaining an earl."

"Am I to understand that you intend to take him to America and rent him out?" I gasped.

"Something of the sort," he admitted. "I'll start him off at Newport about June. I won't get any money for that, but it'll add a new ring to his halo if one of the nobs there has him first; besides, it will show he's the real thing. With the Newport punch in his ticket, the rest will be easy."

"Do you imagine, in a democratic country like ours——" I began indignantly.

"That's all right, Mr. Gatewood; America's the grandest country in the world, and the man who says it ain't must answer to Archibald J. Beamer. We're patriotic and we're fighters; we can lick our weight in wild cats, by Moses! But the eagle's our emblem, and the eagle, he's an aristocrat. There you have it in a nutshell."

I nodded sorrowfully. I was forced to admit that the Star Booking Agency was, at least, two parts right.

"And now," said Mr. Beamer, "I must get busy. I'm stopping at 'The Hermitage,' and I hope to see a lot of you while I'm here. But I never let friendship interfere with business," he added tactfully. "Good-by. Be good to yourself."

With this parting admonition, he rose, shook hands, then disappeared in the direction of the casino.

Two days later, while driving to Nice, I passed Beamer. He was in a motor car; by his side sat the Earl of Carmondale.

CHAPTER II.

Before my sister grew accustomed to the dizzy distinction of having married a Puddleston-Acker, she suffered—or so she maintains—from numerous attacks of vertigo; for a Puddleston is to Vermont what a Biddle is to Philadelphia. Can one say more? Of course, the Acker in the name was decidedly a step down, but my sister would tell you that, without it, her husband would have been unbearable. Indeed, I have

often heard her say: "Stoney, if you don't stop being a Puddleston, I'll scream!" To do him justice, my brother-in-law, as an Acker, was charming, and my sister having missed no opportunity to clip his wings, his Puddleston flights became less and less frequent. It was distinctly as an Acker that he welcomed me to Puddleston Hall.

My journey to southern Vermont was the result of a year-old promise. That I had never spent a summer in Porchester was, if my sister were to be believed, a source of great mortification to her; so, on reaching New York—after leaving Monte Carlo, I had knocked about in England for a month or two—I began preparations to such good purpose that the last week in May found me at Puddleston Hall.

I soon discovered that Porchester prided itself on being exclusive. And, as a Puddleston-Acker, my sister, I regret to say, proved past master in aiming social guns at the merely rich. There was, to be sure, an unwritten law against shooting down eligible bachelors—even in Porchester this great economic principle was observed. But for all except eligible bachelors, *family* was the Porchester password; without it, the social citadel might not be entered. In a way, this was most refreshing, for, in America, the password is so apt to be: "If you haven't got money, you needn't come around." Still, it had its disadvantages, as you will learn later.

For a man who would rather converse with the ragman than not, to be plumped into a reserved seat near the throne of a miniature kingdom, is, on the whole, upsetting. I was exhibited at the Country Club, introduced to various men, to a baker's dozen of girls and women, approached as a possible candidate for the polo team, and, as a last feather in my cap, was told that Barry Randolph, the most eligible bachelor in Porchester, had taken a fancy to me. Rosalie, my sister, was particularly gratified by Randolph's display of friendliness.

"He has money, family, and position," she said, with an air of finality.

"Who was the fat girl?" I asked. We

had just returned from the Country Club.

"That is Maudie Perkins. I want you to be nice to her."

"Why?"

"She's a sweet girl, and she has two millions."

"I could never be rude to two millions," I said, rising from my chair.

"Where are you going, Dick?"

"I'm not sure," I replied. "I shall either go back to the Country Club and dance the *carmagnole* on the front veranda, or do something equally democratic."

"Are you so bored, dear boy?"

"No, I'm not exactly bored, but I long for the companionship of the socially obscure."

"Then," said Rosalie, "you had better call on Mrs. Sanderson Burr."

Puddleston Hall, with its low, oak-beamed ceilings, its ivy-hung walls, its slate roof, and quaint dormer windows, was decidedly picturesque; the formal gardens, the flower-bordered vegetable beds, the straw beehives in the orchard, the dovecot in the stable yard—all spoke most reminiscently of England. There was, too, a little willow-fringed river some three hundred yards from the house. It was toward the river that I turned my steps on leaving Rosalie.

The boathouse contained an electric launch, a skiff, a punt, and a canoe. On such a golden afternoon, there could be but one choice; lighting my pipe, I stepped carefully into the canoe. If the sum of its intention had been to loiter, the river could not have chosen a more circuitous course, nor have flowed more gently. But I, being restless, and in no mood for drifting, must ruffle its waters; hugging the west bank, I darted downstream, rounded a bend at full speed, and all but ran into a girl. Indeed, had I not swerved so violently as to upset my own canoe, I should undoubtedly have bowled hers over.

You may put my act down to sheer chivalry, for not till I rose, sputtering, and shook the water from my eyes, could I secure a fair look at her. One look, and I stood silent, bewitched. It was my blessed privilege to watch her



"Well, if this ain't a sight for sore eyes!"

expression of alarm change to subdued merriment; it was my rare fortune to hear her speak.

"Ah," she said, "I see you are on bottom."

"On the contrary, I am treading water," I replied.

"Are you sure?"

"Perhaps it's mud," I admitted; "but, if so, it is uncommonly watery mud."

"You might have run me down," she said severely.

"I'll carry a horn hereafter. That is, I will if you will."

She did not deign to notice this re-

mark; instead, she set about securing my paddle.

"Is there anything more I can do for you?" she asked.

"You are not going to abandon me?"

"If I can be of any use——"

"You can, at least, lend me your moral support."

"I'm not sure you deserve it."

"If I hadn't upset myself, I should have upset you."

"If you hadn't rounded the bend at such a reckless rate of speed, nobody would have been upset. Still, I do not wish to appear ungrateful."

"But you do!" I declared. "You know very well I have nothing to bail out my canoe with."

"I know very well you couldn't get into your canoe if it were dry. Why don't you take it to the bank?"

"I hate walking through mud," I explained.

"Do you like standing in water up to your shoulders?"

"I almost believe I do."

"In that case, I will leave you."

"Oh, please!" I began.

But before I could finish my protest, she was gone. Hatless, my hair plastered to my head, I stood gazing after her—a ridiculous, dripping figure.

It was a simple enough task to haul my craft to shore, tip it free of water, and reëmbark. As I paddled toward the Puddleston landing, it occurred to me that the enchanting creature in the canoe must be a friend of Rosalie's. I hadn't been introduced to her yet, but of course I would be. Perhaps she was dining at Puddleston Hall that very evening? I remembered, now, that Rosalie was giving a dinner in my honor.

"I've invited all the people you will want to know," she had said.

Certainly that included the girl in the canoe.

The dinner was a great disappointment; *she* was not there. I had the honor of taking in Maudie Perkins, an honor I would have willingly foregone. Rosalie, much distressed over my evident failure to appreciate Maudie, took me to task directly her guests had left.

"I don't mind your being bored to death, but you shouldn't show it. Everybody noticed it."

"Maudie didn't."

"That's because she's so sweet and unsuspicious."

"And dull."

"Maudie isn't dull; she has temperament."

"All that money can buy."

"Dick, you're horrid!"

"I'm not half so horrid as I am disappointed," I said. "Now, if you had invited the prettiest girl in Porchester to your dinner——"

"Good gracious! Who is she?"

"I don't know."

"I can't imagine whom you mean."

"She has eyes the color of cornflowers, and wonderful brown hair."

"Where did you meet her?"

"I haven't met her—I want to. I saw her on the river this afternoon, in a canoe."

"It couldn't have been Sissy Marquis. She has blue eyes and brown hair, but she's frightened to death of the water."

"This girl looked as if she'd been born in a canoe."

"Then it must have been that Carter girl."

"And who is she, pray?"

"Mrs. Sanderson Burr's niece."

"Ah! The socially obscure lady!"

"She lives across the river in that white sepulcher with a tiled roof; she calls it an Italian villa."

"I recognize the house."

"Her husband made his money in soap."

"A good, clean way of making money," I observed.

"And she doesn't know a soul here, and is never likely to," Rosalie continued.

"That's where you're wrong," I said.

"If the girl I mean is Mrs. Sanderson Burr's niece, then you and I are going to call on Mrs. Sanderson Burr."

"But, my dear Dick!"

"We are, truly."

"You are absolutely unreasonable."

"I can't see it."

"You mean you won't see it. It is all very well for you to call on whom you will; you don't live here. But if I am nice to this utterly impossible Mrs. Sanderson Burr, I shall have to be nice to her after you are gone."

"No woman with such an adorable niece could be altogether impossible," I asserted recklessly.

Rosalie eyed me thoughtfully.

"I've never known you to want to meet anybody—man, woman, or child. Or girl, either, for that matter. Dick, old man, I believe you're in for it."

I nodded foolishly.

"By the Lord Harry," I said, "I believe I am."

CHAPTER III.

That it takes more than a mile of pergolas and a tiled roof to make an Italian villa is an architectural truism; one may even add a row of cypress in tubs, a marble Aphrodite, a carved fountain, and a sundial—and still fall short of the ideal. It is another truism that the ideal is rare of attainment. To put it kindly, then, the Villa Paradiso was an unattained ideal; the sort that would have made John Ruskin blow out his seven lamps of architecture, and tear his hair. But John Ruskin was dead, and the Villa Paradiso shone resplendent in the morning sun.

Rising at six, I donned my riding clothes, and, after a cup of coffee, cantered off from Puddleston Hall. It was a delicious morning; a veil of mist hung over the river, and the air was sweet with the scent of lilac and apple blossom; I loved each dandelion, each daisy pattern in the meadow, each drop of dew on the grass—I could have hugged the world to my heart. Instead, I made straight for Mrs. Sanderson Burr's villa, which, as the possible cradle of my hopes—if one could call such an astonishing mass of brick and plaster a cradle—had suddenly become important. The gateway stood temptingly open. It was no part of my plan to turn trespasser, but surely only a gardener with an exaggerated sense of duty would be up and about at such an hour. I decided to enter.

The grounds were far more extensive than I had imagined. I came upon a row of maples, a group of fine elms; I reviewed a soldierly pergola, whose white columns marched bravely up a hill; I discovered a marble Aphrodite rising classically from the center of a pool—or was she trying to escape from the goldfish? I wondered if there were sharks in the Ionian Sea.

A shiver of leaves, the stir of birds in a smother of foliage, the music of running water—these are sounds to make a poet's pulses leap, and his heart beat faster. But there is one sound even more delightful; the rustle of a woman's gown. She stepped daintily into the

sunlight, the glory of the morning in her eyes.

I dismounted hastily from my horse.

"I have," I said, "to apologize for trespassing."

She favored me with a look of mild surprise.

"I had the honor of nearly upsetting your canoe yesterday. As for my being here——"

"Pray don't apologize; tourists form part of our daily fare. Oh, dear! Here comes that dreadful little man!"

With a nod and a smile, she circled the pool and disappeared.

A moment later the dreadful little man confronted me with outstretched hand.

"Well," said he, "if it ain't my old friend, Mr. Gatewood!"

"Beamer!"

"Yes, sir; Archibald J. Beamer. And mighty glad he is to see you. Shake!"

I shook.

"It's the limit," declared Mr. Beamer, "how little the world is. See you in New York, see you in Monte Carlo, see you in Porchester."

"This is the last place I should have expected to see you. Are you here for long?"

"Going this afternoon."

"You're looking very well."

"That's right. And when Archibald J. Beamer looks well, he is well. I've been going some since I saw you in Monte Carlo, Mr. Gatewood. I like a touch of high life as well as any man, but I never let it interfere with business—no, sir! If they think by feeding me off of gold plates they can make me come down in my prices, they're mistaken, that's all there is to it."

"I should infer that the Star Booking Agency had succeeded in landing the Earl of Carmondale," I said.

"Sure, I landed him. Got him staked out at Newport. Next week he goes to a brewer's family in Morristown, and after that—— It ain't quite settled, but I guess his nibs will do three days' time in the palace up yonder."

He pointed to the huge, frosted cake of a house on the hill, then winked

knowingly. No wonder *she* had called him a dreadful little man.

"Of course the contract ain't signed yet, but— Well, I ain't worrying any."

"I don't believe you ever worry," I said severely.

"That's right; I let the other people do the worrying. But this dealing with women is the very dickens. Here I am, offering an A-number-one earl for a thousand dollars a day—dirt cheap, that's what it is—and, would you believe it? they all try to beat me down in my price!"

"No wonder; it's preposterous!"

Beamer shook his head.

"It ain't as if I was a bargain counter, and the earl was a remnant," he explained. "No, by Jinks! See where he's been staying at Newport; read his press notices; look at his family. Why, man, he's the real social flypaper! Lock your doors, and the first families will come buzzing in at your windows. Whoever gets him is *it*, you can take it from me. And in this case, with you as a friend of the family to help things along I think—"

"But I'm not a friend of the family," I protested.

"Don't care for the old lady, eh? Well, frankly, Mr. Gatewood, I don't blame you; between ourselves, she lacks what I call class. But, say! If her niece ain't as classy a bit of calico as was ever buttoned up the back, I'll eat my hat."

It would have afforded me the deepest pleasure to have made Mr. Beamer eat his hat—and his words. Being, alas, in a woefully false position, the best I could do was to glare at him, and mount my horse.

Beamer regarded me reproachfully.

"Now, don't run off mad," he begged.

"I didn't mean anything."

"I dislike very much your manner of alluding to my friends."

"I thought you said they weren't your friends."

"I said nothing of the sort."

Beamer stood silent for a moment, then slapped his leg.

"I see just how it is," he roared.

"You can count on my being discreet, Mr. Gatewood. The old lady may be looking for something better, but I'm on your side, and Archibald J. Beamer stands by his friends to the last ditch. Remember that."

"You're entirely wrong," I responded hotly.

"Now, now! Don't get huffy! No smoke, no fire—that's what I always say—and you're terrible fiery, Mr. Gatewood."

"That," I said, "is the result of taking a ride before breakfast; I am always fiery before breakfast, Beamer. Good morning."

I cantered toward Puddleston Hall in a distinctly bad humor. What a little beast Beamer was, with his A No. 1 earls, and his thousand-dollar-a-day prices! What a shame—what an appalling shame—that such a love of a girl should have such a social climber for an aunt!

She had worn a garden hat trimmed with cornflowers, and a simple gown of virginal white; the picture she made, standing by the pool, lingered in my memory—slight, girlish, graceful, fragrant with youth. And she had favored me with a friendly smile.

It was plain that we must call at the Villa Paradiso that very afternoon, for, before long, the whole world would know of Carmondale's contemplated visit—I counted it as settled, you see—and it would be intolerable to have Mrs. Sanderson Burr believe Rosalie capable of calling out of deference to an expected earl. Rosalie, however, proved difficult.

"I'll go next Friday, or Saturday—or next week," she temporized.

"But I want you to go to-day, this afternoon."

"Don't be unreasonable, Dick. Why, you aren't even sure the girl is her niece!"

"Yes, I am."

"And when did you make this bothersome discovery, pray?"

"Never mind that part. I know what I'm talking about."

"I promised to meet Stoney at the Country Club at five."

"Then we'll call on Mrs. Sanderson Burr at four."

Rosalie sighed.

"It's a dreary position to find oneself in. If I'd known you were so impressionable——"

"I'm not impressionable. Haven't I spent my whole life running away from girls and women?"

"And now, to see you running in the opposite direction! Really, it's too bad of you, Dick. Besides, I had quite set my heart on your making up to Maudie; lots of men have wanted to marry her."

"No doubt," I assented dryly.

"And now to find you bewitched by a pair of brown eyes——"

"Blue eyes," I corrected.

"When I had quite counted on your marrying Maudie——"

"Don't be absurd!"

"I can't help being absurd when you ask me to do such absurd things."

"There's nothing absurd in a friendly call."

"But I don't feel friendly toward Mrs. Sanderson Burr. Why should she come to live in Porchester, where she isn't wanted? Why should she desecrate its prettiest hill with that hideous house of hers? Why should she allow her beautiful niece to go canoeing on the river? Why should she have a beautiful niece at all? Is she really pretty, Dick?"

"Ravishingly pretty."

"And do you think she'll like me?"

"My dear, are you aware that ninety-nine women out of a hundred would have said: 'Do you think I'll like her?'"

"Where you're concerned, I always try to hitch my wagon to the hundred mark, Dicky boy."

And that, I think, is one of the sweetest things that any woman ever said to any man.

CHAPTER IV.

"I couldn't feel more excited if I were calling on Bluebeard, or Lady Macbeth," said Rosalie, as she stepped from the motor car to the broad terrace in front of the Villa Paradiso.

"I'm frightfully nervous," I confessed.

"You look deevie in your flannels."

"One may look nice, and still feel twittery," I observed. "Do you suppose she'll be at home?"

"Of course she will," said Rosalie, with the easy optimism of indifference. "Isn't that a hideous door?"

The door in question was of heavily carved oak, black with recently acquired age. Yet it proved an admirable door in one respect; it opened promptly to my ring.

The man in plum-colored livery was plainly impressed by Rosalie's appearance. He was sure Mrs. Sanderson Burr was at home.

"And Miss Carter?" I asked timidly.

She, no doubt, was at home, too. Would we step this way, please? He left us seated on gilt-and-satin chairs, in an enameled, brocaded room.

"I wonder," said Rosalie, when we were alone, "what *Louis* is held responsible for this!"

"Perhaps it is a catholic combination of the three periods?" I suggested.

"Three periods and a dash, my dear."

"One might call it *Louis* Chippendale," I ventured, pointing to a cabinet.

"Or *Louis* Verni-Martin," said Rosalie, indicating a screen. "No, I have it; it's *Louis d'or*."

She laughed so heartily over her discovery that I grew uneasy.

"Remember," I said severely, "we didn't come to scoff."

"Goodness, no! And we're not going to remain to pray, either. Fancy, praying in a *Louis d'or* room!"

"In such an extremity, I think one would be justified in addressing one's petitions to the Golden Calf," I responded gravely.

"Hush!" said Rosalie. "Here she comes."

In some previous paragraph I have been guilty of rhapsody to the rustle of a woman's gown. I wish to say, in passing, that the quality of the rustle depends more on the wearer than the material employed. There is no doubt that Mrs. Sanderson Burr rustled; yet the stir of her petticoats reminded one of nothing more sentimental than gentlemanly floorwalkers, and silk, linen, and lace at so much a yard.



Had I not swerved so violently as to upset my own canoe, I should undoubtedly have bowled hers over.

My first impression was that she looked expensive. I retained this impression from the moment she entered her *Louis d'or* reception room, till she subsided—I use the word advisedly—into a gilt chair, large, blond, full-bosomed; an elaborately upholstered Juno, who had gone a bit to seed. From her manner of sitting, I learned that her stays were very long, very fashionable, and very uncomfortable. I learned, too, that her words took color, chameleonwise, from her auditor; when Rosalie appeared impressed, she was all assurance; when Rosalie appeared depressed, she grew deprecatory. But, above everything, she was glad to see us.

Pope has said that manner makes the man; he might well have added that

women make manner. Rosalie was all *noblesse oblige* and great lady; Mrs. Sanderson Burr wrestled with the difficulties of a dual rôle, playing gratified hostess and *grande dame*, as the occasion required.

It was: "I've been meaning to call for weeks." A white lie. "My brother admires your house so much." A black lie. "There is a languor peculiar to Italy, I think." A platitude. And to each in turn Mrs. Sanderson Burr would reply: "So good of you. Does he, really? I quite agree with you, dear Mrs. Puddleston-Acker."

Ping-pong has gone out, but little celluloid balls of conversation such as these still cross and recross the social net. It is very dispiriting, however, to have to sit by and watch such a game, particularly when one's thoughts—and heart—are elsewhere.

With Rosalie, as with nature, it is all things in their season; the winter of my discontent was an unconscionable time passing. But finally the sun shone, and it was spring.

"I understand," said Rosalie, "that you have a beautiful niece. I am disappointed not to have seen her."

"She's somewhere round—in the garden, perhaps? She's always there, or on the river. Frankly, dear Mrs. Acker, I don't know what to make of the child; she is pretty, as you say, but she doesn't care a pin about meeting people."

"The indifference of youth to its advantages is proverbial," I murmured.

"She has only been with me six months. Her father was my brother, a most estimable man, but—" I gathered that Mrs. Sanderson Burr did not care for estimable men. "She will be sorry not to have seen you," she concluded feebly.

"And I shall be sorry if I am not allowed to explore your garden," I said. "May I?"

"Why, certainly, Mr. Gatewood! I'll ring for Thomas, and have him instruct the head gardener—"

"No, no," I protested. "To be personally conducted is not to explore. I want to do it *on my own*, as the English say. Thank you so much."

Without waiting for further permission, I flew from that gilded cage of a room, leaving the lettuce and bird seed of social intercourse behind me.

I paused for a moment on the terrace. By turning one's back to the house, one could almost imagine oneself in paradise; the sweet slope of the hill, the silver ribbon of river at its base, the splendid dip of the Berkshires, the fairy mountain barrier to the east—how beautiful it all was!

Quitting the terrace, I wandered down a path till I came to a rose trellis; there I found a gardener on a stepladder, bending to the pleasant task of training a crimson Rambler in the way it should ramble.

"Have you seen Miss Carter?" I asked.

"I have," said he. "She's in the apple orchard."

As there was no friendly bee at hand to lead me to the orchard, I trusted to the scent of apple blossoms in the air, and, literally following my nose, crossed an open space, circled a maple grove, clambered over a dry-stone wall, leaped a little brook, and—

The tree under which she sat was old, and gnarled, and fragrant; beside her, on the grass, lay a book bound in green buckram; a long-stemmed buttercup marked the page where she had stopped reading; she was eating wild strawberries. I tried to incorporate an air of deference into my approach; I summoned up what I imagined to be a disarming smile.

When she saw me, she stopped eating strawberries, and regarded me with much the same interest she might have bestowed upon a clown stepping into the ring to shout: "Here I am again!" It was most disconcerting. Plunging recklessly into explanation, I floundered through a sea of words: I was Mr. Richard Gatewood—Mrs. Puddleston-Acker was my sister—We had called on Mrs. Sanderson Burr—I had been sent on a delicate mission—to find a Miss Carter—I had found her, perhaps? If so, would she accompany me to the house? Or did she prefer to remain where she was? In the latter

event, my sister would be desolated—Still, much was to be said in favor of apple orchards—Personally, I knew nothing more attractive—Might I sit down?

She was evidently amused; not so much by my monologue as my breathless manner of delivering it.

"Yes, you may sit down," she said. "Why shouldn't you?"

Why, indeed! I was delighted to find that any one capable of looking so deliciously fresh and flowerlike could be so reasonable.

"This is the third time I've seen you," she continued, with a frankness I thought adorable.

"Being Mrs. Puddleston-Acker's brother is my one distinction," I said.

"And being Mrs. Sanderson Burr's niece, mine. May I offer you a strawberry? I hope you don't mind their being a bit squashy."

"I like my strawberries squashy. Ah, I see you've been reading 'The Beloved Vagabond.'"

"Yes. Isn't he a dear?"

"I'm something of a vagabond myself."

"Perhaps? But you wander about with a cake of soap in your hand, instead of a violin. I'm sure you would never have married Blanquette."

"Rather her than the stupid English lady. Really, Miss Carter, you make me feel as if I'd traded my birthright for a bathtub."

She laughed merrily.

"If I can't play the fiddle, I have, at least, spent my life paying the fiddler," I continued.

"We all do that."

"A slave to soap may be a slave to sentiment as well," I argued.

"And serve two masters?"

"Sentiment is a mistress," I explained. "I can be fearfully sentimental."

"Ah, but it is so much easier to be fearfully sentimental than to be a beloved vagabond."

"You mean it is so much easier to be a vagabond than to be beloved," I retorted.

I shall never forget her next words,

nor the sweet seriousness with which she uttered them.

"I think," she said, "the hardest thing in the world is to be worthy of being beloved." Then, conscious of having bared her heart to a stranger: "I can be fearfully sentimental, too, you see. Aren't the apple blossoms heavenly?"

"They are, indeed! I could sit here forever. But I don't believe I will," I added hastily, as she started to rise.

"I am going in to meet your sister; it was friendly of her to call."

As I walked beside her through the orchard, feeling singularly unworthy, I remembered that Rosalie had said I looked deevie in my flannels; I hoped it was true. Deevie is an abominable word, but when dejectedly conscious of one's defects, it is helpful to feel some confidence in one's clothes.

CHAPTER V.

Although it had been Rosalie's intention to make a ten-minute call, sheer good nature, a sisterly desire to please me, and a considerable curiosity concerning Miss Carter, had conspired against her; we found her drinking tea on the terrace with Mrs. Sanderson Burr.

Did any man ever see two women he cared for meet for the first time, without experiencing a moment of absolute terror? On such an occasion, the best women that ever lived can be—often are—so cruel to each other. Do they disapprove through instinct? Or habit? Or choice? Do they show dislike willfully? Or are they incapable of hiding it? It is for answers to such questions as these that one turns to the high heavens above—or to Henry James.

In justice to Rosalie, however, nothing could have been more gracious than her greeting of Miss Carter; she assumed, at once, a charming air of proprietorship. It was: "You must come and see me very soon. I'm sure we shall have such good times together this summer. The people of Porchester have nearly bored my poor brother to death; I should be so grateful if you'd help me amuse him."

Mrs. Sanderson Burr, aware for the first time, perhaps, that in her niece she had overlooked a valuable social aid, nodded approvingly, in no wise disconcerted that Rosalie's appeal appeared to be directed solely to Miss Carter.

"Yes, indeed," she said; "Geraldine and I will be delighted to amuse Mr. Gatewood."

So *her* name was Geraldine.

As for my hostess, she had already succeeded in amusing me, for deftly as Rosalie had gone about building her little house of friendship, Mrs. Sanderson Burr had been more deft—she had planted her ladder against the wall before the mortar was dry.

"Well," I said, as we flew toward the Country Club, after making our adieux, "what do you think?"

"I think Stoney will be furious with me for being late."

"Bother Stoney!"

"I've bothered him enough already."

"Don't be tiresome. What I want is your opinion of *her*."

"She's a dear, wild rose of a girl."

"Not wild," I objected; "just rose."

"But her aunt is a rose, too."

"Nonsense!"

"A perennial climber."

"Then *she* isn't a rose at all."

"It takes all sorts of roses to make a garden," Rosalie remarked sagely.

"If you'd only be serious!"

"She's a love, Dick; I mean it. Simple, frank, unaffected——"

"And beautiful?"

"That goes without saying."

"Then you approve?"

"With all my heart."

"You're the sweetest sister in the whole world!" I cried.

Rosalie smiled.

"What do you suppose your sweetest sister has undertaken?"

"I can't imagine."

"To act as Mrs. Sanderson Burr's social pilot. She doesn't know it yet, but—— Honestly, Dick, what could I do? Here she is, about to become a hostess to an earl—a real, live earl. And she's at her wit's end to know what to do with him."

"Why does she have him, then?"

"She can't help it; he's an old friend. And now that he's in America——"

"I see," I said.

"Of course she'll have to entertain him."

"Of course."

"And one can't entertain without inviting people."

"Some women can't," I amended.

"And she doesn't know anybody to invite to meet him, poor soul, so naturally I shall make all the women call on her."

I was silent from sheer indignation. To have one's sister imposed upon so outrageously! To be forced to sit by and see the imposition carried forward! An old friend, indeed! The Earl of Carmondale was bought and paid for, the bill receipted, the ink scarce dry. If it were not for—for Geraldine—— What a dear name! But I mustn't call her that, even to myself. Still, perhaps if——

I looked at Rosalie. From the intent gaze with which she favored her lorgnette, I gathered she was busy with plans for forcing reluctant—and, maybe, recalcitrant—ladies to leave cards at the Villa Paradiso. I looked past Rosalie, through the walls of the villa itself, and beheld Mrs. Sanderson Burr, triumphant and vulgar, patting the rungs of her ladder; I saw Geraldine standing beside her, sick with shame. Or was she aware of her aunt's machinations? I wondered how much she knew. Then, to ease my mind, I cursed Beamer under my breath—Beamer, and his Star Booking Agency, his A No. 1 earl, and lastly myself for having allowed him to take me into his confidence that afternoon at Monte Carlo.

That Mrs. Sanderson Burr should impose on Rosalie's good nature—and credulity—was maddening certainly. Still, it was not for me to throw stones. Besides, what difference if Mrs. Sanderson Burr did enter through the needle's eye in the kingdom of Porchester society? I decided, on reflection, that it made not the slightest difference in the world.

Mrs. Freddy Trenwith, Maudie Perkins, and Barry Randolph were having

tea together on the veranda of the Country Club when we arrived.

"Hullo! Come and join us," called Maudie.

"Yes, do!" said Randolph, rising lazily.

"Oh, please!" pleaded Mrs. Trenwith, a quick, darting humming bird of a woman. "Please, please, pretty please!"

"I'd like to awfully," said Rosalie, "but I promised to meet Stoney here at five, and I'm fearfully late. Has anybody seen him?"

"He's upstairs playing auction with Colonel Venner and Stanley Waring—he and Freddy. I haven't seen you for forty thousand years. Don't you like my new gown?"

"She won it from me," Maudie explained, as Mrs. Trenwith stopped, breathless.

"I didn't."

"I mean you won the money that paid for it."

"It isn't paid for," Mrs. Trenwith retorted triumphantly.

"She never pays for anything," said Maudie. "Do sit down, you people."

"Shall we?" asked Rosalie.

"Why not?" I returned.

"I don't believe Mr. Gatewood approves of us," complained Maudie.

"Stop teasing my little brother," said Rosalie.

"There's so much of you to approve of, Maudie," sighed Mrs. Trenwith. "I say, Barry, my cigarette case is empty."

"There, what did I tell you?" said Maudie, as Randolph touched the bell. "She never pays for anything."

A woman's charity may begin at home, with the black-hearted heathen in Africa, or in any one of a hundred places, but her curiosity usually begins next door—at least, Mrs. Trenwith's did.

"I've been simply expiring to see the inside of that house," she said, when Rosalie had revealed the astonishing fact of our having called at the Villa Paradiso. "How did you happen to go? What is Mrs. Quelquechose like? Do tell me!"

"Why not find out for yourself? Your place adjoins hers."

"Mercy, Rosalie! Have you taken her up?"

"Not exactly. Still, I think you ought to call on her."

"But isn't she fearfully *nouveau riche*, and all that sort of thing?"

"Not a bit. Is she, Dick?"

"Not a bit," I answered, amused to find myself acting as Mrs. Sanderson Burr's champion.

"I'll call if you will," said Maudie.

"One can't be too careful," objected Mrs. Trenwith.

"You can always drop her, you know," said Randolph. "Besides, it would be rather a lark."

"And it would be a kind thing to do," declared Maudie. "Just think how you'd feel if you'd lived here for a whole year, and nobody had called on you."

"Fat people are always so sympathetic," complained Mrs. Trenwith, with a bored air. "For my part, I don't care two straws whether anybody ever calls on Mrs. What's-her-name."

"I shall call to-morrow," said Maudie, with decision.

"Where do I come in?" asked Randolph.

"You go with me."

"And I'll go with Freddy," said Mrs. Trenwith. "It's good discipline to make him go calling; he hates it so. Besides, I'm simply dying to see the inside of that house."

It was after this manner, then, that Mrs. Sanderson Burr's social fate was decided. I wondered what Geraldine would think. Would she approve of Maudie Perkins and Mrs. Trenwith? It was very possible she might consider *them* vulgar. It was, also, very possible that she might consider Barry Randolph handsome. He was, too, confound him!

CHAPTER VI.

"She's vulgar in such a nice way," said Mrs. Trenwith. "Freddy and I called yesterday afternoon. Isn't her house a delirium? And she's going to entertain an earl next week. I say, Rosalie, did you know she was going to have an earl when you asked us to call?"

"If a truthful answer should tend to incriminate or degrade," Barry Randolph began.

"Of course she knew it," said Maudie Perkins.

"Then why didn't you tell us?" demanded Mrs. Trenwith.

Rosalie smiled.

"I shall follow the advice of my counsel, and refuse to answer," she replied.

"Didn't you think her niece attractive?"

"Most attractive," said Randolph.

"Have you met her, Gatewood?"

"Yes."

"Stunning, isn't she?"

"Er—rather."

"My brother doesn't care for young girls, as a rule," Rosalie explained.

"Lucky you're no longer young, Maudie," said Mrs. Trenwith.

"I'm ten years younger than you, dear. Twenty-six plus ten—"

"The answer is twenty-eight, my love."

"Mrs. Freddy has been twenty-eight for six years."

"And will be for six more," replied that lady complacently. "A woman is as old as she looks."

"As she thinks she looks," Randolph corrected.

"That makes me even younger. Do you suppose Mrs. Sanderson Burr will give a party for her earl?"

"I know she will," said Rosalie. "I'm giving a dinner for her next Wednesday night. Will you come?"

"Delighted."

"And you, Barry?"

"If I may sit next to the niece."

"I'll come without asking," said Maudie. "Whom else will you invite?"

"The usual people."

"What I should like to know," observed Mrs. Trenwith, "is how you happened to take her up."

"I'll wager anything I could tell you," said Maudie, favoring me with a sly glance and a mysterious nod. "But I won't," she added reassuringly.

And to think that I had called Maudie stupid!

All Porchester was calling on Mrs. Sanderson Burr, and all Porchester

wished Rosalie to know it. It became the fashion, then, for victorias and motor cars to stop at Puddleston Hall on their way home from the Villa Paradiso, for when favors are granted it is well that the recipient should be informed at once. And was not a call at the Villa Paradiso equivalent to a favor bestowed on the mistress of Puddleston Hall? This, at least, seemed the general impression. One heard: "Of course, I simply called out of loyalty to Mrs. Puddleston-Acker, who has taken this woman up." Or: "If any one else had asked it, I shouldn't have considered going." Or: "Mother absolutely refused to go at first, but I made her see that we must all stand by dear Rosalie." Who could fail to feel a real affection for a world wherein one may gratify one's curiosity, and prove one's loyalty at the same time?

I wish I could learn to be more charitable; I am always discovering that people whom I have barely tolerated are more generous, more unselfish, more truly kind than I could ever hope to be.

It took me an unconscionable time to realize that Maudie Perkins wasn't stupid; it seemed stupid to me that she should be so—er—robust, that she should possess two millions, that she should belong to the socially elect, that she should be vulgar at times. As if any but the socially elect could afford to be vulgar! And—since one is always the last to credit one's own stupidity—it took me even longer to discover it was I who had been stupid. Her single sly glance and mysterious nod must have put me well on the way to this discovery, however, for when she said: "I want you to take tea with me to-morrow afternoon," instead of murmuring regrets, as I should have done the day previous, I accepted with alacrity.

In Porchester, where the horse is still king, this rule applies: One may appear at any function—formal, informal, or formidable—provided said function shall take place between the hours of six a. m. and six p. m.—in one's riding clothes. Following the custom, then, I rode to tea next afternoon mounted on

Rocket, a big bay hunter, whose name, so suggestive of pyrotechnic qualities, had been bestowed entirely in deference to his having been foaled on a Fourth of July.

The difference between a house and a mansion is that a mansion has a back stair, or so I was once told by a house agent in England. At all events, though I did not see it, I shall take the back stair for granted, and state it as a fact that Maudie dwelt in a mansion—an odd creation of shingle and granite which she had built herself. On this afternoon, it looked most attractive with its red-and-white-striped awnings, its window boxes filled with flowers; and Maudie, standing on the veranda, waving a welcome to me as I cantered up, looked most attractive, too.

Some women are at their best under their own roof-tree; Maudie was one of these.

"It was bully of you to come," she said, as I joined her on the veranda, after leaving Rocket with a groom. "I want you to meet my two darlings. Here, Peter! Here, Pan! Aren't they loves?"

The two ginger-colored dachshunds sat up, side by side, each gravely offering me a paw, which I as gravely accepted.

"That," said Maudie, "is my entire family—except Mrs. Parr, who is supposed to be my companion; she isn't particularly companionable, but she's a dab at housekeeping. Do sit down! Not that chair—take a lazy one. There! Now let me give you a cigarette. Do you want your tea this minute? Because, if you do, you can't have it. You may have some Scotch, though."

"Perhaps a cigarette will do me till tea time," I said.

"Don't you like my house?"

"I do, indeed!"

"I think I'll have a cigarette, too. What's the use of being an orphan, if you can't do as you please? Do you know, I haven't a single relation in the world—or a married one, either? I feel like an incubator chicken, sometimes; even my guardian is a trust company."

"You might have been the ward of some snuffy, disagreeable old gentleman."

"Or I might have been bequeathed to a catty aunt who didn't love Peter and Pan. Peter, you rascal, stop licking Mr. Gatewood's boots! I call my place Merrymount, and we endeavor to live up to the name, don't we, Peter? We do everything here but bant."

She laughed so heartily at this reference to her size that I could not help joining her.

"Rosalie has been begging me to go to Marienbad," she continued, "but I hate the place. Besides, if I was slim, it wouldn't be me. Pan, you young imp, leave Mr. Gatewood's crop alone!"

And so she ran on, gay, inconsequential, talking, as one might say, in patches—a bit of harmless gossip, a whimsical narrative of adventure, an account of Peter's shortcomings, or Pan's misdeemeanors—while I sat by, an approving and amused listener. I understood now why my sister was so devoted to Maudie.

A moment later I discovered that I, too, was devoted to her; for surely it was no mere accident that, on looking up at the sound of hoofs on the gravel, I should behold Geraldine riding toward us, mounted on a splendid black thoroughbred.

"Will you help her off, while I ring for a groom?" Maudie asked.

Would I?

I flew down the steps, but, alas, she was too quick for me! Freeing her foot from the stirrup, she slipped to the ground.

"If you'll take the bridle while I fasten up my skirt," she said.

So we had tea together on Maudie's veranda. I blessed Maudie for having invited her—and me; I blessed Geraldine for having accepted, and for looking so adorable in her simple brown habit—I loved her trim little boots. And Geraldine loved Peter and Pan, and Peter and Pan loved Geraldine, and Maudie beamed on us both. It was a gay little party. But best of all, the ride home! Geraldine rode superbly—I was about to say like a princess; but that

would be hardly fair, for the only princess I ever saw in saddle—it was in Hyde Park—sat her horse abominably.

It was three miles from Merrymount to the Villa Paradiso; we took them slowly. Our way led by the river. When were we going canoeing? I might tip over, if alone, but in a canoe that held two— In August there would be water lilies—

We left the river to wind between stone walls, over which friendly apple trees leaned. Did she still haunt the orchard? Still prefer wild strawberries to stupid books? Did I still fancy myself a vagabond?

We found a world of things to say to each other, Geraldine and I. She was, it seemed, looking forward to Rosalie's dinner party.

"It will be the first grown-up dinner I ever went to," she confided. "It was sweet of your sister to ask me."

"You'll be going to all sorts of things before the summer is through," I said.

"And Miss Perkins; I only met her day before yesterday, and she invited me to tea. I refused at first, but she was so friendly, and— Why, now I feel as if I'd known her all my life!"

"So do I."

"You're coming to our party?"

"I haven't been asked."

"Oh, but you will be! The earl doesn't arrive till next week."

"Are you interested in his coming?"

"Fearfully! I've never seen an earl."

"He isn't much to look at."

"You've seen him?"

"Only in passing—at Monte Carlo, last winter."

"I can't help being curious about him," she confessed.

Nor could I help wondering how much she knew. Did she really believe the earl to be an old friend of her aunt's? Or did she think of him as an unusual piece of social furniture, for rent by the day at an exorbitant price? She had met Beamer, for, in my presence, she had called him "that dreadful little man." And so he was a dreadful little man.

Still, might not her expression of disapproval apply more to his mission at



"I call my place Merrymount, and we endeavor to live up to the name, don't we, Peter?"

the Villa Paradiso than to his lack of personal charm?

A senseless occupation, this asking oneself questions! Did any one ever ask himself a question he could answer?

CHAPTER VII.

Alas for the plans of mice and men! Stoney Acker, my brother-in-law, took it into his silly head to go on a fishing trip the day before the dinner, leaving me to play host, to sit at the head of the table and devote myself to the guest of honor on my right, Geraldine's aunt.

Circumstances having removed my rose-colored spectacles, I looked at Geraldine with a jaundiced eye; she was having far too good a time, it seemed to me. Barry Randolph, on her right side, was disgustingly attentive; Giffor Clausen—one of Porchester's eligibles—on her left, had quite abandoned his partner for her. And but for Stoney Acker's dereliction, I should have been sitting beside her! Making the best of

a sad situation, I turned to Mrs. Sanderson Burr.

I found her most difficult to talk to till I discovered that I wasn't expected to talk at all; it was for me to listen—and to answer questions. This conversational arrangement had its great advantage; it left me free to glance, as often as I dared, at Geraldine, to adore the poise of her head, the dear slope of her shoulders, the clinging softness of her gown. Geraldine, the radiantly beautiful, whose eyes shone like stars!

Geraldine's aunt shone, too; she was plastered with diamonds. Her gown, an elaborate creation of black lace and gold—Geraldine wore white—must have cost a small fortune.

It is said that Colonel Venner, a singularly ponderous man, resigned his commission in the army because the wife of his ranking officer ate her soup—as Barry Randolph put it—with the muffer cut out. He was, it is true, at the time, a mere lieutenant, the rank of colonel being bestowed upon him later

in consideration of his having dived, from his favorite chair in his favorite club window, into the muddy waters of the Spanish War. At all events, Colonel Venner was looked upon in Porchester as an epitome of good form; a word from him carried far. And Colonel Venner had pronounced Geraldine charming.

Rosalie was immensely pleased by this verdict, rendered by the colonel in person.

"Then you really approve of her?" she asked.

"Aw—yes, dear Mrs. Acker, the young lady—er—Miss Carter—is aw—um—charming. Let us play bridge."

In Porchester, the natural corollary to twenty guests at a dinner party is five tables at bridge afterward. But Geraldine, it seemed, did not play, revealing thereby an attitude toward the more serious things of life which Colonel Venner considered most reprehensible.

"She has never learned," said Mrs. Sanderson Burr.

"Er—aw—most extraordinary!" said Colonel Venner, eying Geraldine with disapproval. "My dear Miss Carter, you owe it to yourself to—um—aw—learn. Let me recommend Elwell."

Now, Elwell was to Colonel Venner what the Koran is to a Mohammedan, the Bible to a Presbyterian elder; he quoted Elwell on all occasions. And woe betide the player at the colonel's table who trusted to his card sense rather than to the Elwellian precept! It might win him the odd, but it wasn't bridge, and the colonel was the first to tell him so.

"Nasty old thing!" said Maudie. She was referring to the colonel. "I believe he prays to Elwell."

"Who is Elwell?" asked Geraldine.

Elwell, my dear, is the Mary Baker Eddy of bridge. You're not playing, Barry?"

"No," said Barry Randolph; "I'm not playing."

"Then," said Maudie, "let's go upstairs, we four, and play billiards."

It was a soft, warm night; a night of a slender moon, and a smother of stars. The ivory balls clicked merrily. Maudie

was humming a gay little chansonnette. We sat by an open window, Geraldine and I, looking out on a lilac-scented world.

"I beg pardon, sir. A telegram for you, sir."

I looked up, and there was Griggs standing at my elbow. Having just returned from Wonderland, I was tempted to shout: "Off with his head!"

"I thought it might be important, sir."

I took the telegram and slipped it into a pocket.

"If there is an answer, I'll ring," I said. "Thank you, Griggs."

"Aren't you going to open your telegram?" Geraldine asked when we were once more alone.

"It isn't important."

"How do you know?"

As a matter of fact, I didn't know.

"I have the old-fashioned dread of telegrams," she continued. "I always connect them with bad news."

"This one relates to business, no doubt," I replied carelessly.

"But it may be urgent; some one may need you. Would you ignore a cry for help?"

For answer, I rose—we sat in shadow—went over to the light, and opened my telegram. It had been sent from New York at six p. m., and it was now eleven. It read:

MR. RICHARD GATEWOOD, Puddlestone Hall,
Porchester, Vermont.

My breadwinner has escaped. Will you come to New York at once and help me find him? If not, a certain family we both know will be down and out socially.

Address Hotel Breslin.

BEAMER.

For monumental impudence! As if the earl's escape could possibly interest me! Would I go to New York? Decidedly not! If Mrs. Sanderson Burr's intimate friend, the earl, failed to appear at the Villa Paradiso at the appointed time, then he could fail to appear. I'd be hanged if I'd scour highways and beat hedges in search of him. No; Beamer must flush his own birds. It was bad enough to be in his confidence. And now the dreadful little man was trying to turn me into a confederate! But if he expected me to pot his earl for

him, or play retriever, he was jolly well mistaken. I would wire him a scorching answer—later. In the meantime I—

"The telegram didn't amount to a row of pins," I said.

"I'm glad it contained no bad news," she replied.

"Barry is a regular wizard to-night," said Maudie, chalking her cue. "He has just made a run of seventeen. Why, here is Mrs. Freddy."

"I'm dummy," explained Mrs. Trenwith. "I've come after you, Maudie, to take Mrs. Birmingham's place; she's sixty dollars ahead, so of course she feels too ill to go on. I'd like to shake that woman! By the way, Mrs. Sanderson Burr plays such a ripping game that Colonel Venner has elected himself chairman of the heart convention, and is making Elwell eyes at her. Come along, Maudie."

"I'm blessed if I will," said Maudie. "I want to talk to Miss Carter. Take Barry."

"Yes, take me," said Randolph.

Mrs. Trenwith was playing at the table with Mrs. Sanderson Burr and Colonel Venner. How curious she looked! How curious every one looked—a certain strained expression about the eyes. I realized for the first time there was such a thing as a bridge face. I realized, too, that Mrs. Sanderson Burr was radiantly happy. She was a success at bridge; she was soon to play hostess to an earl—Or was she? How the women of Porchester would talk if the earl failed her. I found myself feeling distinctly sorry for Geraldine's aunt.

Naturally, a woman with the social bee in her bonnet is bound to get stung, sooner or later. Still, in this case, there was always the chance that Beamer might find the earl. Even if he didn't, Mrs. Sanderson Burr could give her ball; but she would be rather in the position of obtaining guests under false pretenses—it would be distinctly a sad affair. And tongues would wag, cruel things would be said of her, and—By Jove, it was a shame!

You may write me down a lunatic, or a meddlesome old bachelor—I was thirty-three at the time—but before I bade Geraldine good night I had decided to go to New York and help Beamer find his earl.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Half the fun of having a party is to talk it over with some one after the guests are gone," said Rosalie.

"It was a most successful party, my dear."

"Colonel Venner is quite mad about Mrs. Sanderson Burr; he says she plays bridge like an angel."

"Poor angel?"

"Why poor angel?"

"I'm afraid she'll fall off her ladder."

"I'm sure she won't."

"The world is full of fallen angels."

"Thanks to you men."

"I don't mean that Mr. Sanderson Burr will fall into any one's arms," I explained.

"I should hope not!"

"We must help her to hold on."

"Goodness, Dick! Are you having a vision? Wasn't there some one in the Bible who saw angels climbing a ladder?"

"That was Jacob. But none of his angels fell off, I believe. By the way, I've got to go to New York to-morrow morning."

"Not really?"

"I'm afraid so. I received a telegram this evening; business, you know."

"But, Dick—"

"Oh, I'll return in a day or two. You haven't even mentioned Miss Carter," I added reproachfully.

"She was adorable. And didn't Maudie look nice in her new gown?"

"Maudie is a love."

"I can't help wishing it were Maudie, instead of Miss Carter. You don't know, you can't know, what a dear Maudie is."

"I can guess."

"Well, if you must go to New York, you might buy me a pair of red silk stockings—number eights."

"What on earth—"

"I'm going as a red rose."

"Oh! The fancy-dress ball?"

"Yes. I've the rose costume I wore at the Bannerton's four years ago, but I've lost my stockings. I'll tell Valentine to give you a sample in the morning."

"A sample of what?"

"Of red chiffon—to match my stockings to."

"Anything else?" I asked helplessly.

"If you could go to a milliner's, and get me some little red roses for my slippers. Have you a costume for yourself? No? Then you'd better order one. Try Weinstock & Co., theatrical tailors, on Broadway, near Valentine's. You have nice legs. Why not go as a troubadour, or something?"

"I shall consider it," I said. "Thanks for your testimonial to my legs."

"I'm horribly sleepy. Good night, dear. You'll take the nine-o'clock train, I suppose, so I won't see you in the morning. I shall sleep late. And, Dick, dear—"

"Yes."

"Don't forget my red stockings, will you?"

From Porchester, one goes to New York by way of Albany; it is quite a dreadful and tiresome trip. Once at the station, I dispatched a telegram to Beamer advising him of my coming, bought my ticket, secured a seat in the parlor car, then waited; for it is a Gatewood characteristic—Rosalie shares it with me—to be in the station at least half an hour before train time. I was sitting on a bench, reading the *Porchester Gazette*, when a friendly voice said: "Good morning." Looking up, I beheld Maudie.

"You?" I cried, springing to my feet. "Are you going to New York, too?"

"A bore, isn't it? But I have to go."

"At all events, your going makes it far less boring."

"I'm more than glad to have company."

"So am I."

"It's Mrs. Sanderson Burr's fancy-dress ball that is taking me. I've got to have a costume made. What is Rosalie going to wear?"

"Rosalie? She's to be a red rose, I believe. She has her costume, but I've got to match this in silk stockings." I drew the piece of red chiffon from my pocket, and waved it despondently.

"Poor man! Do give it to me."

"Gladly! Number eights, you know."

"Yes, I know. Are you loaded down with other errands of this sort?"

"Only red roses for her slippers."

"I'll buy them, too."

"If you will, I shall love you forever," I exclaimed fervently.

"It's a bargain, then; I shouldn't mind at all being loved by you. But forever is a long time. Hadn't you better make it a fortnight?"

"No; forever!" I replied firmly.

The memory of that journey to New York with Maudie is still green and fragrant, for never was there a more delightful journey! To feel free to say what you will, when you will, to be accorded ungrudgingly the sweet privilege of silence, and to care to listen—given these, and you have the foundation for the most blessed of all human relations, true companionship.

One sees, on every hand, men rearing their altars to love on rose-colored sands—women, avid of the sacred flame, lighting green fagots with their eyes; and the altars shift, and the fagots smoke and smolder, then grow cold. As we sped toward New York, I resolved to know Geraldine better, to be sure of our companionship.

"You dine with me to-night. That's understood, isn't it?" I said, as I put Maudie and her maid into a taxicab at the Grand Central Station. "May I call for you at a quarter to eight?"

"Please. At the Colonial Club; I'm putting up there."

"And I'm at the Ritz-Carlton. *A bientôt.*"

"*A bientôt.*"

I stared after the cab till it was lost in the crush of traffic; then, hailing another, was driven rapidly to my hotel. In my mind's eye, I saw Beamer kicking his heels at The Breslin. Well, he could continue kicking them till I'd had a tubbing and a change. What a wild-geese chase! I stood about as

much chance of finding his bounding little earl as I did of being elected president of the United States.

Does one change one's sympathies with one's environment? In Porchester, I had been desolated at the thought of Mrs. Sanderson Burr's disappointment should the earl fail her, but now I found myself almost wishing my noble quarry might escape. Poor beggar! He had gone into this thing with his eyes shut, perhaps? I reviewed the penance he had done, three days of dreariness spent with a brewer's family in Morristown, and was half inclined to feel sorry for him; one should live and let live, it seemed to me, and if Carmondale hadn't escaped, he might have perished from sheer boredom. No doubt he possessed an infinite capacity for being bored, his appearance certainly suggested it; still, brewer's boredom might easily have proved fatal—it sounded fatal. Besides, it was rather a plucky thing to do, to run away. Not that running away was usually so regarded. But it showed he had spirit. And that he had fled from bed, and board, and possibly fifty pounds a day, made his action, considering the mercenary motives which must have prompted his bargain with Beamer, seem almost heroic.

I had no difficulty in getting Beamer on the wire. I telephoned him from my room at the hotel, was hailed as his deliverer, and told that as soon as a taxicab could accomplish it he would be with me.

My first impression was that Beamer looked haggard, but a second glance at his round face and pink cheeks convinced me that his pallor was entirely spiritual; it was his assurance that had turned gray. He greeted me, sad-eyed, wringing my hand like a long-lost brother.

"By Moses, I thought you would never come, Mr. Gatewood! These last two days have been hell, sir, simply hell!"

"No trace yet of your recreant breadwinner?"

"No trace, no clew, no nothing! He lit out with a Gladstone bag, and his trunks are still at Morristown. And

that's not the worst; the people I had him rented out to there paid me for a whole week in advance, and he only stayed three days, so that puts me four thousand to the bad. Got to dig up, go down into my jeans and dig up!"

"Exactly," I said; "no performance, so you must return the gate receipts. Too bad!"

"I knew you would share my disappointment, Mr. Gatewood," he replied, with disarming simplicity. "I guess I know who my friends are, and I guess I appreciate 'em. And now," he continued, brightening a bit, "the thing to do is to catch him."

"Yes," I agreed. "But how? Have you the least idea he's in town?"

"Where else could he be?" Beamer demanded with the New Yorker's ready contempt for the rest of the nation. "Don't you fret; he's here, all right. And we'll catch him, between us, as sure as my name is Archibald J. Beamer," he added, with a touch of his old assurance. "The time to catch him is at night, you see; he'll have dinner somewhere, and then go to a show—a girl show. He's a great one for petticoats. You should have seen him coming over on the boat; he——"

"We'll not go into that," I said. "I presume you have haunted roof garden and restaurant, and inspected hotel registers?"

"Sure, I have. And that's the dope for us; restaurants first, and roof gardens later. What do you say to our making a list? You take Sherry's, and Del's, and Martin's, and I'll take Rector's, and Jack's, and——"

"But I'm dining out this evening. I shall be about a good bit," I added, as Beamer gazed at me reproachfully, "do a play, perhaps, with supper afterward. And I shall keep my eyes open, of course. Still, even if I were to see your earl, I wouldn't know what to do; I couldn't call a policeman and have him arrested. Frankly, Beamer, as I now view this affair, it seems particularly sordid and—er—unworthy. I'm blessed if I'll stoop to having anything to do with it."

"I guess you've forgot your lady



"Charmed, I'm sure," said his lordship. "I—er—ah— By Jove!"

friends up in Porchester, Mr. Gatewood. You ain't doing this for me; you're doing it for them. Where will they be if his nibs turns up missing next Tuesday night? And them giving a fancy-dress ball in his honor. Down and out, sir! Down and out! And why? Because you got stiff-backed at the last minute, and wouldn't stoop to pull 'em out of a hole."

"Not another word!" I cried, half exasperated, half amused. "I'll stoop, and I'll pull. Only, in Heaven's name, what am I to do in case I discover this troublesome earl of yours?"

"That's easy; telephone Jack's, and

take Maudie with me? If I did, I should have to confide in her. It wasn't my secret; still, Maudie was surely most discreet. Besides, it would change the whole character of the episode to have her share it with me; together, we might view it in the light of an exciting and laughable adventure.

"Well, sir?"

I turned to Beamer, who was regarding me with expectant eyes.

"It shall be as you suggest," I said.

CHAPTER IX.

If I had ever called on a favorite niece at a convent, ever sent up my card

ask for Carl, the head waiter. I'll keep in touch with him to-night, so, in case you're successful, all you have to do is to put Carl wise. Just tell him the gentleman Archibald J. Beamer is looking for is at 'Del's,' for instance, and he'll get the news to me, all right."

"And you'll come and take charge of him?" I asked anxiously.

"Come? I'll be there with bells!"

"And if he should leave before you arrive?"

"Then you'll have to follow him."

I saw myself abandoning Maudie, to follow the earl into the night; I heard myself, with the hoarse voice of melodrama, commanding an astonished Jehu not to lose sight of *that cab*. Or should I

to a spinster aunt at the Martha Washington, I might have shown more spirit; as it was, when my taxi set me down in front of the Colonial Club at a quarter to eight, I hesitated before the visitor's door. For the Colonial Club is, as every one knows, a modern club for modern women, and, as a modern man, I was, logically enough, a bit daunted at the thought of entering it alone. So I stood there, gathering courage from the night—it was a brave night—till the door opened, and a woman, tall, statuesque, shrouded in a filmy cloak of lace, swept toward me.

"I hope I haven't kept you waiting," she said. "I was sure you would be nervous about coming in."

"It seemed such a daring thing to do."

"Yes, I know. I came down early on purpose to save you."

"I'm sorry I'm such a coward, Miss Perkins."

"I shouldn't like a man who could enter a woman's club complacently. Shall we go now?"

I helped her into the taxi.

"We're dining at the Beaux Arts," I said. "Do you mind?"

"I adore it. What a heavenly night!"

It had never occurred to me before that New York was a city of mystery and romance. I wondered vaguely if Maudie shared my discovery. Too bad we were going such a little way! Still

—Pleasantly conscious of light and shadow and half-seen faces of men and women, I looked on the night with smiling eyes.

"It was nice of you to order dinner in advance," said Maudie, inspecting the menu. "If there's anything in the world I like, it's *sole au vin blanc*. And I like our table, it is so nicely placed; and I like your roses, and—I like everything to-night—even you, Mr. Gatewood."

"I wish you wouldn't call me Mr. Gatewood," I began glibly.

Was there something in her eyes that made me falter? What beautiful eyes they were! Strange I had never noticed them before. Wonderfully brown, and a little sad, perhaps. It hurt me to think of their seeming even a little sad.

"We are such good friends, you know," I added lamely.

"Of course we are; I couldn't bear not to be friends with Rosalie's brother. She is such a love!"

"It is curious Mrs. Sanderson Burr's fancy-dress party should be responsible for this," I said, indicating our table. "You came to town for a costume, I came to town—" I paused; I had suddenly remembered Beamer.

"I came to town on a most—er—peculiar errand," I continued. "Did you ever find a needle in a haystack? But that's purely a question of luck, isn't it? More needles are found by sitting on them than by searching for them, I fancy. Still, I suppose I shall have to do some searching. You see, the particular needle I'm looking for is a man whom I know by sight only, having never spoken two words to him in my life."

"That sounds exciting."

"It's really more sordid than exciting, I fear; especially since I am at loss to know whether I'm looking for him out of friendship, out of loyalty, or merely because I am naturally a busybody."

"I'm sure it is not the last."

"I wish I were sure. The fact remains, it is important he should be found."

"Then," said Maudie, "in all deference to this delicious dinner, and to your delightful self, I must remind you that you are wasting your time."

"Indeed, I'm not!"

"But you are not searching for your needle."

"More needles are found by sitting than by searching," I repeated. "I'm sitting."

"You might compromise by searching as you sit. This place is something of a haystack, you know. One, two, three—I can see seven tables perfectly."

"My needle would be dining tête-à-tête, I fancy."

"Have you noticed the people directly behind you—a pretty girl, and a sallow, savage little man with a Kaiser Wilhelm mustache?"

"My needle is neither savage nor sallow," I explained. "He's a broken Lily

with drooping shoulders and drooping mustache, who seems to look at life through a glass darkly, with one eye, at least. In short, my needle is an effete flower of Albion, a mixed metaphor with a monocle."

"Then I believe I've seen him."

"No doubt," I assented dryly. "One can't drive down Piccadilly without seeing dozens of him. He's a distinct type; I've met him over and over again."

"Yes. But I mean to-night—here!"

"Not really?"

"Just as sure as I'm sitting in this chair—when we came in—I noticed him particularly because he was with a woman whom I've seen somewhere before—I can't place her. They had a table in the corner over there."

"By George!" I exclaimed. "Did you notice the color of his hair?"

"It was a sort of sunburned yellow. The woman with him was a foreigner—French, I should say, or Basque. She was talking forty to the dozen. He looked bored, I thought."

"Yes, he would look bored." I stared vacantly at the tablecloth. "I'm thinking," I said apologetically; "that is, I think I'm thinking. Will you pardon me if I make a little excursion into the fields of approximate thought? And may I talk as I go?"

"Please do."

"It is, of course, highly improbable that the man I'm looking for is the man you saw when we came in."

"You can easily determine."

"True. But there are other things to consider. In the first place, I'm not at all crazy about finding the man I'm looking for—indeed, I'd much rather not; in the second place, if it is he, I must keep an eye on him till help, to be telephoned for, shall arrive; in the third place, how in the deuce can I keep an eye on him without spoiling our dinner?"

"The dinner must not enter into it at all. As I understand it, you are, in a way, pledged to find this man if you can."

"It's something like that," I admitted.

"Then," declared Maudie, with decision, "you must redeem your pledge—now!"

"I'm afraid you're right," I said, rising reluctantly. "I shan't be gone long. Wish me luck, won't you?"

"With all my heart. Here's hoping you find him."

"No, no," I protested, "not that! Here's hoping I don't find him."

I hated leaving Maudie alone in a public dining room; I hated playing house detective, too. A promise, lightly given, and Richard Gatewood, presumably a free agent, had become a mere puppet in the hands of one Archibald J. Beamer. It was a humiliating position, for it proved most conclusively, among other things, that I was sadly in need of a guardian. Wearing the harassed air of one called suddenly on matters of grave importance, I made toward the door, turning when almost there to scan the tables on my left.

No, he wasn't there. Good! It was childish of me to have felt so uneasy. Any one with a thimbleful of sense—Confound it all! Alas, Maudie had been right! There, not ten feet away, sat Carmondale, drooping and bored, and there sat the lady, dark and foreign, talking forty to the dozen. With a sigh of resignation that was three parts profane, I now sought the telephone.

"Is this Jack's, on Sixth Avenue?"

"Yes."

"I wish to speak to Carl, the head waiter."

"He's busy."

"But it is important I should speak to him."

"Well, hold the line."

"This is Carl."

"You know Archibald J. Beamer?"

"Yes, sir."

"He is looking for a certain man, I believe."

"He is, sir."

"That man is dining at the Beaux Arts. Not downstairs, you understand, but in the large dining room on the Sixth Avenue side."

"Thank you, sir. I'll communicate with Mr. Beamer right away."

"Tell him to hurry. I—"

Carl had hung up. Still, I had no reason to believe Beamer wouldn't

hurry. There was, too, another head waiter to be consulted.

I was quite unknown to this other head waiter, whom I now summoned to my side; further, the only letter of introduction I had to offer him was a five-dollar bill; but he accepted the substitute cheerfully, seeming, indeed, to desire my further acquaintance.

"Do you see where I'm looking?" I asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I am looking at the man with the eyeglass, and his companion."

"Yes, sir."

"What I want you to do is to tell me when they are about to leave."

"Very good, sir."

"Also, will you please inform me if a little, bald-headed man with pink cheeks, and an air of searching for some one, comes in?"

"Meaning Mr. Beamer, sir?"

I stared at him in amazement.

"Good heavens!" I said. "Do you know Beamer?"

"Yes, sir. And I'm keeping an eye on his lordship for him till somebody arrives."

"His lordship?" I gasped.

"The same, sir. There's sixteen of us been looking for him since day before yesterday. I call it luck, my finding him, never having seen him in the flesh, as you might say—only his photograph, and that not doing him justice, if you know wot I mean. You'd have thought that Miss Blanche, wot has manicured him, or Pierce, wot has fetched him ice water at the St. Regis, or Wilkins, wot knows him like his own pocket, being his valet, would have stood the best chance, wouldn't you?"

"I should, indeed," I answered wearily.

So Beamer had imposed upon me. With sixteen sleuths and sleuthesses in the field, he had tried to add me to his list. Sleuth No. 17! Blanche, the manicure; Pierce, the bell boy; Wilkins, the valet! Horrible!

"When his lordship come in to-night," the head waiter continued, "the first thing I says to myself is 'that's him.' And I sent a message right off

to Wilkins, just as Mr. Beamer asked me to. Wot's bothering me now is wot's keeping Wilkins. I'm glad you're here, sir, for if his lordship was to get up and go, I couldn't hold him, could I?"

"Er—what?"

"I was saying if his lordship was to get up and go, I couldn't hold him, could I?"

"No!" I replied, with more fervor than the occasion demanded, perhaps. "No, I'm hanged if you could!"

Then, turning a traitorous back on my erstwhile accomplice, I made straight for the Earl of Carmondale's table.

CHAPTER X.

Had I not been angry I doubt if I should have acted as I did; but it is hardly soothing to one's vanity, or temper, to find one has been playing the old game of the cat, the monkey, and the roasted chestnut. In this case, though I was the unfortunate cat, it was not too late, thank Heaven! to throw the chestnut—Carmondale, of course—back into the fire. With this thought in mind, I made straight for Beamer's earl, and once at his table coolly drew up a chair and sat down.

At this unexpected interruption of their tête-à-tête, Carmondale's companion favored me with an inquiring glance, while the earl, screwing his glass into his eye, looked me over carefully as if I were some strange, outlandish creature.

Having expected something of the sort, I was not in the least abashed.

"Pardon me for intruding," I said, "but you are Lord Carmondale, I believe. My name is Gatewood, Richard Gatewood, and I've taken it upon myself to tell you that a man named Beamer has discovered you are here, and may turn up at any moment; so if you wish to escape him, you had best leave at once."

"Ah!" exclaimed his lordship. "Beamer? Extraordinary chap! What?"

"Yes," I said; "and he's coming here."

"Uncommonly good of you to warn me. Don't want to see Beamer till to-morrow."

"Then," I said, "you'd better leave at once."

With that I rose and left him, returning to Maudie and my dinner.

"You must have had luck," said Maudie, "or you wouldn't have stayed so long. You found your needle?"

"It was you found him," I said. "Guess who his companion was."

"I'm sure I've seen her before."

"No doubt. She's Cléro, the dancer."

"Not the great Cléro? Why, of course! I saw her three years ago, in Paris."

"This is her first trip to America, I believe. She's dancing on Hammerstein's Roof this week. What do you say we go? I'll have a waiter telephone over to find when she comes on, and then I'll send a messenger boy for tickets."

"I should love it," said Maudie. "Are all your troubles over now?"

"Yes," I said; "all my troubles are over, for this evening, at least."

I was dying to tell Maudie the whole story from the very beginning, for it would both amaze and delight her, I felt sure; besides, I felt I owed it to her after deserting her so ungallantly in a public dining room. But of course I couldn't tell her, for Beamer had pledged me to secrecy in the matter. The earl was our secret, Beamer's and mine. I resolved in future to be, if anything, more guarded in receiving confidences than in giving them.

Come to think of it, Beamer might dash up to our table at any moment now, to demand an explanation from me. What had I meant by letting the earl escape? I could picture Maudie's surprise, my own rage and embarrassment; for, after all, it would be difficult to explain. I began to be as anxious to avoid meeting Beamer as the earl had been. Swallowing my coffee hastily, I suggested an amendment to our plan of going to see Cléro dance.

"It's too lovely a night to waste on a sordid, smoky roof garden," I said. It would be just my luck to run into Beamer at Hammerstein's. "Let's go for a drive, instead."

"Yes, let's," said Maudie.

I don't know exactly where we went, though I think it was to Van Cortlandt Park. I should have liked to go on forever, and when a man would like to go on forever in a bumpy little taxicab he is either a lunatic or not alone. Certainly I was not alone, yet I doubt if a dozen words passed between Maudie and myself from the time we left the restaurant till we were almost home. But of what use are words when the night is perfect, and the moon rides high in the heavens, a fair shepherdess surrounded by an infinite flock of stars?

The hour hand of the Metropolitan Tower clock pointed to eleven when we drew up in front of Maudie's club.

"I've had a delightful evening," I said. "And now I've but one wish in the world—that we may lunch together to-morrow."

"I'm sorry," said Maudie, "but I'll be shopping every minute to-morrow, and I'm taking the four-o'clock train back to Porchester."

"Then," I said, "I shall hope to see you at the station. Good night."

Entering my hotel five minutes later, I all but ran into the arms of Beamer. As he was not only the last person in the world I expected to see, but the very last I wished to see, I tried to pass him with a nod. But I defy any one to pass Beamer when he doesn't intend to be passed.

"Hold on," he said. "I've been waiting for an hour to see you; I want to thank you for the good turn you did me this evening."

I looked at the little man in amazement.

"I got your message almost immediately, and I reached the Beaux Arts just as the earl was leaving."

"Then," I said, "he didn't escape, after all?"

"No, I got there just in time, thanks to you. I want you to know I appreciate what you did for me, Mr. Gatewood."

"Er—don't mention it," I said. "So you captured your earl. I suppose you'll keep him under lock and key till you ship him to Porchester."

"Not at all," said Beamer. "He's fly-

ing about loose to-night, but he's given me his word to meet me to-morrow morning at ten o'clock."

"Ah," I said; "but will he meet you?"

"You can better believe he will. One thing about Carmondale, when he says he'll do a thing, he'll do it."

"A very pleasant attribute," I said.

"Yes. And he's promised to go to Porchester Monday, so your friends up there needn't worry. Give you a pointer, though: you'd better get in your best licks before Monday, for the earl he's a corker, and I shouldn't be surprised but what he made a dead set after that little Miss Carter. She's some class, she is."

"Er—thank you so much," I said. "I'll— Good night!"

When I entered the elevator, I was boiling with rage at Beamer; when I left it I was smiling. What an extraordinary little man, to be sure! No doubt America is full of Beamers. If so, I pray that I may never meet another.

I was an unconscionable time going to sleep that night, and I should have been glad to sleep late next morning, but Beamer wouldn't let me; that is to say, my telephone rang at eight o'clock. Waking with a start, I bounded out of bed to find Beamer on the wire.

Would I lunch with him that day?

No, I wouldn't.

But the earl was to be there, and no doubt I'd like to meet the earl.

No, I didn't want to meet the earl.

Beamer seemed disappointed.

"I thought you'd like to meet him before he went to Porchester," he said. "Tell you what I'll do: I'll let you have him this noon. You can invite some of your friends to meet him if you like."

"But why, in the name of Heaven, should I care to invite my friends to meet the bouncer?" I roared.

"Well, he's an earl," said Beamer.

"No doubt," I replied; "but I'm not introducing rented earls to my friends."

I shall always remember that day as one of the longest I ever spent, for I had but one errand, to order my costume for Mrs. Sanderson Burr's fancy-dress ball; and as I'd already made up my mind as to what costume I should wear, the or-

dering took but a few moments. After that, I was free to do as I pleased, but unfortunately there was nothing pleasing to do. Restless and irritable, I spent most of that day kicking my heels at my club. It was not till Maudie walked into the station about five minutes before train time that peace descended upon me.

The trip to Porchester passed like a dream; we were no sooner on the train than off, or so it seemed to me. Maudie was in excellent spirits, I was as gay as a cricket; we chattered away like magpies. And when we reached Porchester, on discovering there was no one at the station to meet me—I had forgotten to wire I was coming—Maudie took me to Puddlestone Hall in her motor. So again I said good night to her under the stars.

Rosalie, who was on the point of going to bed when I arrived at Puddlestone Hall, greeted me with a sisterly warmth, and a volley of questions. Why hadn't I wired I was coming? How could I expect to be met at the station when I didn't wire? Had I remembered her red stockings, and the roses for her slippers? And how had I got home from the station, anyway? "Did you have to walk, poor boy?"

"No," I replied. "I didn't have to walk, and I did buy your stockings. That is to say, Maudie bought them."

"Maudie?"

"Yes. We went to New York together, we came home together; Maudie bought your stockings and roses—they're in my bag—and I came from the station in Maudie's motor. Moreover, I want to tell you, my dear, that Maudie is one of the very nicest people in the whole world."

"As if I didn't know that," said Rosalie. "Now do open up your bag, and let me see those stockings."

CHAPTER XI.

Paragraph from the *Porchester Gazette*:

The Earl of Carmondale will arrive in Porchester this morning to spend three days at the Villa Paradiso as the guest of Mrs. Sanderson Burr. Needless to say, society

is on the qui vive to meet this scion of an ancient aristocracy, and has provided lavish entertainment for Mrs. Sanderson Burr's distinguished guest. To-night, at Puddleston Hall, Mrs. Puddleston-Acker will give a dinner in his honor; to-morrow night Mrs. Sanderson Burr's beautiful villa will be the scene of a magnificent fancy-dress ball, followed by supper on the terrace. The Earl of Carmondale is an old friend of Mrs. Sanderson Burr's, having often entertained her at his historic castle in Kent.

I happened upon this remarkable paragraph while at breakfast the following Monday morning. Of course, I knew the earl was expected that morning. But would he come? Notwithstanding Beamer's belief in the integrity of his lordship's word, I had my doubts. Yet, on the whole, I rather hoped he would come. Except for its sordid side, the earl's introduction into Porchester society seemed to promise me much secret entertainment; it would be amusing to sit behind the scenes, and watch the performance of "The Rented Earl," a comedy written in Monte Carlo, and staged for the first time in Porchester by Mrs. Sanderson Burr. Naturally I shivered a bit at the thought of Rosalie acting as assistant stage manager. Still, that couldn't be helped. Besides, I had already decided it mattered little whether Mrs. Sanderson Burr entered Porchester society through the eye of a needle, or through the halo of an earl.

One thing, however, was clear in my mind; I had washed my hands of Beam-

er and his earl. Henceforth they could paddle their own canoe, and if they upset they could drown; not one finger would I raise to help them—not one! So I boasted to myself. But boasts have an evil way of coming home to roost. Had I known what was in store for me in connection with Beamer and his earl, I would have left Porchester by the first train. Instead, being ignorant of the dénouement Fate had written into the

lines, I was prepared to sit down calmly and watch the play.

Of course, I have reference to "The Rented Earl"; for, to tell the truth, I was, at that time, acting a part in a play of my own, and I pledge you my word I didn't know what to make of it. Was it a tragedy, a comedy, or a farce? It seemed to contain an element of all three.

In the first place, it is tragic, is it not, to believe you've fallen in love, and then discover you haven't? Although every man knows in his heart he is fickle, he hates to admit it, even to himself. It came to me suddenly the day after I re-

turned from New York that I was no more in love with Geraldine Carter than I was with last year's almanac. It was a tremendous shock to me. Here I'd dragged Rosalie out of her social orbit, insisted on her being friendly with Mrs. Sanderson Burr, and now that the result I had desired was accomplished, I found myself with no appetite for the fruit of Rosalie's toil. Not that I believed for a moment Geraldine would accept me if



Maudie as Carmen, a vivid, glowing picture that set my heart to beating.

I proposed to her. But it was humiliating to have every one think—and every one did think so by this time—I wanted to marry Geraldine, when I didn't.

As a matter of fact, I didn't want to marry anybody. Mine was a restless spirit. A home, and a wife, and children were all very well, but I preferred to roam through this wonderful world, to meet pleasant people, to see strange sights in strange countries, to be with men. Foolish to ask a man to give all this up for a woman. But enough of such unimportant matters.

That the earl did arrive in Porchester on the date advertised is now a matter of history. To begin with his first public appearance, at Rosalie's dinner; Rosalie, looking like an angel in a wonderful Callot gown, greeted the earl graciously, presented him to her guests, and then: "Lord Carmondale, my brother, Mr. Gatewood."

"Charmed, I'm sure," said his lordship. "I—er—ah—— By Jove!"

"So you remember me?" I said.

"Rather! Deuced queer my meeting you here!"

"Why, Dick!" exclaimed Rosalie. "Have you met Lord Carmondale before?"

"I met him in New York last week," I replied.

"He did me a good turn," declared his lordship.

"Tried to," I amended. "I understand you were captured, after all."

"Yes. But I put him off. I say, is he a friend of yours?"

"I've known him for several years," I replied guardedly.

"Extraordinary chap, Beamer!" said his lordship. "Extraordinary!"

You can imagine my surprise at hearing the earl refer openly to Beamer. In the circumstance I should have thought it would be the last word to pass his lips. I wondered if he accepted my acknowledgment of Beamer's acquaintance as a tacit understanding between us. Did he imagine that, belted or rented, all earls looked alike to me?

"If he only knew what a contemptible figure he cuts in my eyes," I thought, "he wouldn't be so friendly."

At dinner, Rosalie shared the earl with Maudie, and I was placed next to Geraldine. Poor child! She must have found me a difficult dinner companion, for, try as I would, I couldn't keep my thoughts off the earl. I wondered if Maudie recognized him as the man she had described to me the night we dined at the Beaux Arts. What a wonderful night that was! I wished we were dining there to-night. Big dinners were a bore, anyway; the ideal thing was to dine tête-à-tête.

I now turned to Geraldine, and asked her opinion of the earl. She thought him charming; he had such nice manners, and such a pleasant voice. Didn't I consider him distinguished-looking?

To do him justice, when you came to study him, the earl did possess a certain distinction. Just at present he looked particularly boyish and likable; he was talking to Maudie.

Left alone with the men after dinner, the earl sought me out, and, over his coffee and cigarette, asked my advice on a subject which was, he declared, very near his heart.

"I've always wanted to try my hand at ranching in the States," he said, "and I never believed I could do it till I met Beamer in Monte Carlo last winter. He's making the arrangements now, and when I leave here I'm going straight to a ranch in Colorado, though Beamer says I mustn't settle on anything till I've seen California. Chap I know has a ranch in British Columbia. Too cold up there, I fancy. Ever been to California?"

Yes, I'd been to California.

"Ever ranched?"

"No."

Texas was a ranching State, he'd heard, but, somehow, Colorado or California appealed to him more. No, not that kind of a ranch. Friend of his owned a lemon ranch somewhere; trees all died, or something. Cattle ranching was his idea—or sheep; open country, life in the saddle, and all that sort of thing. No sitting down and watching trees grow; stupid to sit down and watch trees grow. Horses, and dogs, and plenty of elbowroom. Too crowded

in England. No sport! Nothing to do but chase a bally fox, or shoot birds. Scotland not much better."

"There's Africa," I suggested, "and India."

"Too expensive! Cost a pot of money to go big-game shooting." No, he'd thought it all out, and America was the place.

"And then," I said, "Beamer came along and made it possible."

"Yes," admitted his lordship. "Trying chap at times, Beamer—deucedly trying!—but a good sort in the main. Been visiting some of his friends till he can get away to go West with me. Rum people, some of Beamer's friends. Not here, of course."

"Then you like it here?" I asked.

"Rather!" answered his lordship. "Fine old dowager, Mrs. Sanderson Burr, and her niece, Miss Carter, is an out-and-out ripper. Never met a more charming gel—never!"

And so he rambled on. And as he talked, I studied him; and the more I studied him the more I admired the skill with which he pulled the long bow; for of course I didn't believe one word he told me. Ranching, indeed! He was over here to be rented out at a thousand dollars a day. On the whole, the earl impressed me as being one of the most likable, entertaining, and accomplished liars I had ever met.

CHAPTER XII.

Had Mrs. Sanderson Burr bargained with the weather man, as she had bargained with Beamer for his earl, she couldn't have secured a more perfect night for her ball; a soft, alluring night, ruled by a stately moon, and embroidered with pale stars. Rosalie commented upon this as we were leaving Puddleston Hall in the motor.

"It couldn't be better if it had been made to order," she said, referring to the night. "Have you your mask, Stoney?"

"Yes," replied my brother-in-law, who looked particularly handsome and dashing as a pirate of the Spanish Main.

"But why the deuce must we wear masks? They're hot!"

"That's my doing," said Rosalie. "It's so much more fun; especially in a little place like this, where we all know one another so well. I insisted that we should wear masks till supper time. You'll have a much better time if every one doesn't know who you are."

"How about you?"

"I shall have a far better time. And, Stoney, I want you to understand one thing; you're not to camp on my trail this evening."

"There you have it," said Stoney, addressing me. "Rosalie intends to *flâner* about, and doesn't wish to be bothered with me."

"Of course I shall *flâner* about," said Rosalie. "That's what a *bal masque* is for; isn't it, Dick?"

"To be sure," I replied. "On such an occasion, the most demure of women has been known to peacock, and parade, and challenge with her eyes."

"Well, why not?" demanded Rosalie. "It's like amateur theatricals, only better; while it lasts it's a delightful game of make-believe. Besides, Stoney protests too much. Before the evening's over he will have flirted madly with at least a dozen women. As for you, Dick, if—"

"I shall flirt outrageously with every woman I meet," I declared. "I'm Pierrot to-night; light-headed, light-hearted, and, I hope, light of foot."

"Isn't it fun?" said Rosalie. "Nobody knows my costume except you, and Stoney, and Maudie."

"By the way," I said, "what is Maudie going to wear?"

Rosalie laughed.

"Don't you wish you knew?" she replied.

The ballroom of the Villa Paradiso was ablaze with light and color; in the musician's gallery a Hungarian orchestra was playing a ravishing waltz. Looking about me, I took in the whole assemblage—a bewildering spectacle. A bishop was dancing with a Nautch girl, a Mephisto with a Quakeress; a Spanish don, a bullfighter, a Chinaman, a cow-

boy, and a French dandy of a doubtful period whirled past me; I discovered a Queen Elizabeth, a Yama Yama girl, a delightful creature in white tulle trimmed with water lilies whom I decided must be Geraldine—a Madame Du Barry, a Topsy. Rosalie was taking the floor with a Tommy Atkins; Stoney stood in a corner talking to a gypsy. I wondered where Maudie was. Would I know her when I saw her?

A seductive person in Turkish costume now challenged my attention by inviting me to dance.

"Why mourn, Pierrot? If Pierrette is not here, won't an houri do?"

"Take care of the houris, and the minutes will take care of themselves," I answered gallantly, and off we swept in a waltz.

The Turkish lady danced beautifully. But where was Maudie?

My next adventure was with a shepherdess, who taxed me with being one of her lost lambs. Naturally I admitted the charge, and a mad two-step was the result. The shepherdess was a charming creature, no doubt, and I hadn't the least idea who she was. But where was Maudie?

I danced in turn with a beautiful Marsovian, and a kilted Highland lassie who rolled her r's; I sat out a dance with Queen Isabella of Spain, and smoked a cigarette with a nun. By this time I had made several discoveries; the Turkish lady with whom I had danced was Mrs. Freddy Trenwith, Mrs. Sanderson Burr was Queen Isabella, and the cowboy, who appeared to be having the time of his life, was the earl. But where was Maudie? Could it be I had seen her, perhaps danced with her, and failed to identify her? This seemed so improbable that I smiled at the thought, then circled the ballroom, looking carefully about me.

For some unknown reason I began to feel a bit lonely and depressed. I wasn't having half as good a time as I had expected to have. No doubt I had outgrown this sort of thing. I'd tried hard to flirt with the Turkish lady, and the shepherdess, but one couldn't flirt when one was bored. Yes, that was it; I was

bored. Probably my dancing days were over. On the whole, it was just as well. A silly performance at best to go whirling about on a waxed floor. I'd escape to the terrace, and look at the moon.

I made toward the door which opens on the great hall, stopping suddenly as a splendid creature entered on the arm of a jockey, for it needed but a glance to tell me it was Maudie; Maudie in a bewitching costume draped about with a wonderful Spanish shawl, a red rose behind one ear, a high shell comb in her hair—Maudie as Carmen, a vivid, glowing picture that set my heart to beating.

Claiming her attention, I said:

"I am Señor Don Pierrot, late of Fontainebleau, but formerly of Seville. Bizet, who set you to music, was my friend. May I have the honor of the next dance?"

Maudie nodded her consent.

"I wonder if she imagines I don't know who she is?" I thought.

It occurred to me it might be just as well to let her believe I didn't know who she was, so when it came time for our dance, I affected to be mystified.

"I've been trying desperately to have a good time," I said, "but I couldn't until I met you, for, heretofore, I've known who everybody was. I've danced with Miss Geraldine Carter, Miss Maudie Perkins, Mrs. Trenwith, Mrs. Sanderson Burr, and—— You see, my idea of a bal masque is that it isn't complete unless one can have a little flirtation, and I can't flirt successfully when I know whom I'm flirting with; it makes me too self-conscious. Suppose we have a little flirtation. Would you mind?"

Maudie shook her head.

"I wonder if I know you," I said. "I think I must, for otherwise you wouldn't be afraid I'd recognize your voice."

Maudie smiled.

"Yet I feel sure I've never met you, for if I had I would have fallen in love with you long ago."

Again Maudie smiled.

"You possess a silver tongue, Señor Don Pierrot," she said, disguising her voice.

"Yes," I agreed, "a silver tongue, and a heart of gold."

"As to the heart, I'm not so sure. Is the heart yours, by the way?"

"It is yours if you wish it," I replied.

"But is there no Pierrette?"

"Alas," I said, "Pierrette ran off with a gendarme twelve moons ago."

"And Don José deserted me for a *blanchisseuse*."

"We must console each other," I said.

"Shall we dance?"

The orchestra was playing "Amour-euse," and we floated away. I had never danced with Maudie before; I did not know a woman lived who could dance so wonderfully. When the music stopped, I felt cheated, betrayed.

"I never enjoyed a dance so much in my life," I said, and I meant it.

And then that confounded jockey, whom I discovered afterward was Barry Randolph, came up and took Maudie away from me. But by hanging about, I managed to dance three times with her before midnight.

At midnight we unmasked. It was a moment of much merriment, and, I believe, some consternation; for undoubtedly many of the disguises had not been penetrated. Mrs. Freddy Trenwith boasted openly that Colonel Venner, mistaking her for some one else, had tried to kiss her.

"But then," said Mrs. Freddy, "one is always kissing the wrong people—that's life. I say, Maudie, why don't you and Mr. Gatewood have supper with Barry and me?"

"That," I said, looking at Maudie, "is an excellent idea. To tell the truth, I had forgotten all about supper. Suppose I go ahead and secure a table."

With that, I started off, for I was none too sure that Maudie meant to accept Mrs. Freddy's invitation, and I intended to give her no opportunity to decline it.

I found a table for four in one corner of the terrace, and, sitting down, lighted a cigarette. Rosalie drifted by with huge Clarke; the earl and Geraldine passed me, both in excellent spirits, and plainly much taken up with each other.

"That won't do," I thought. "Rented

earls shouldn't make love to innocent young girls; it isn't playing the game."

And then Maudie came, driving all thought of the earl from my mind.

After supper, I suggested to Maudie that we go for a walk in the garden.

"I should love to," she said. "I'm dying for a cigarette."

So we left the terrace, and, proceeding by a winding path with which I was acquainted, made for a little summer-house hidden away in a tangle of honeysuckle.

Neither of us spoke; there was nothing to say, for the night had laid its spell upon us. But it was delightful to escape from the Villa Paradiso, to walk in a garden through moonlight and shadow, a garden sweet with the fragrance of sleeping flowers. Time enough for talk when we came to the summer-house. But, alas! When we came to the summerhouse, we found it already occupied by Geraldine and the earl. And Geraldine was saying: "Do come in and share this lovely place with us."

"Er—yes, do," said the earl.

Much to my surprise, Maudie accepted this invitation. To make matters worse, soon afterward she walked off with the earl, leaving me with Geraldine. I hated it, and I'm sure Geraldine wasn't any too pleased. What in the world was Maudie thinking of? Could it be she still imagined I was in love with Geraldine, and had done this to give me a chance with her?

Later in the evening I was to receive another shock. I had quitted the ball-room after frequent unsuccessful attempts to secure a dance with Maudie, and was sitting alone on the terrace, when who should join me but the earl.

"Have a cigarette?" I said, extending my case.

"Er—no, thanks."

"Heavenly night, isn't it?"

"Er—yes. I say, old chap, I didn't know you were sweet on Miss Carter. If I had known, I shouldn't have—I simply wanted to tell you I'm leaving to-morrow."

"But," I said, "I see no reason for your leaving."

"Yes, there's a reason," replied the

earl. "I'm—I'm deuced hard hit, Gate-wood. Didn't know I was poaching, you understand."

"My dear man," I said, "you're quite mistaken; I'm not in love with Miss Carter."

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed his lordship. "That's—that's ripping!"

"I will admit," I began—I said this so that the earl should not doubt the intention of anything Maudie had told him, for I knew now Maudie must have told him I was in love with Geraldine. "I will admit that when I first came here I was greatly attracted by Miss Carter, and took no pains to conceal it. But since then I've met——"

I stopped suddenly. What was I telling the earl? Was I telling him I'd met some one else, and had fallen in love with her? Well, hadn't I? It came to me suddenly that I'd loved Maudie ever since we'd made that journey together to New York. What an ass I'd been not to realize it before! But the earl was waiting for me to continue.

"Er—yes, that's it," I said. "I—I've met some one else. Nevertheless, it was splendid of you to come to me as you did, and I want you to know I appreciate it."

"Oh, that's nothing!" said his lordship. "Couldn't do anything else. *Noblesse oblige*, you know, and all that sort of thing."

I looked at the earl. He was a rented earl, yet his ideas of honor were those of a great gentleman. It seemed anomalous; but in spite of that, in spite of everything, I liked him, and if the time ever came when I could do him a good turn, I'd do it, no matter what it cost.

CHAPTER XIII.

I can't say the knowledge that I was in love with Maudie brought me much comfort during the next few days. While it is wonderful to be in love, it is wonderfully depressing to have the person you adore think you love some one else, and I knew Maudie was convinced I was in love with Geraldine. Of course, I could tell her I wasn't, but if I were to do so, wouldn't she

look upon me rather scornfully as a weak creature who didn't know his own mind—and heart?

I felt sure Maudie liked me; I even hoped, in time, to make her love me. But it would be uphill work, for I'd made a series of hideous mistakes. And now all Porchester was busy gossiping; I knew it only too well. I also knew what Porchester was saying. It was something like this: "When Dick Gate-wood first came here he fell in love with Geraldine Carter, forced his sister to take up Mrs. Sanderson Burr, and now he's sulking, for the earl is cutting him out."

To describe me as sulking was as absurd as it was unfair. Yet I wasn't feeling particularly cheerful. I hated the gossip that coupled my name with Geraldine's; I hated the position in which I found myself; I hated myself. What a fool I'd been! I remembered those haunting lines of Le Gallienne's:

For, lo, I love a woman this strange way;
To be as dead without her, yet to stay
A stubborn exile from felicity—
Far from her side until the Judgment Day!

I wasn't a stubborn exile, I was merely an exile, but the Judgment Day seemed a long way off; it would never come until I could go to Maudie and tell her I loved her.

You may say you can see no reason why I shouldn't have gone straight to Maudie and unburdened my heart. But when one loves, one is apt to make mountains out of molehills; I felt that Maudie might think I'd turned to her because Geraldine had refused me, and I couldn't have borne that. So I went for long rides, declined all invitations, and avoided the Country Club, with the result that Porchester said I was sulking.

On the fourth day after Mrs. Sanderson Burr's ball, Rosalie got me into a corner, and demanded an explanation.

"You are acting like an idiot!" she said. "There's no reason in the world why you should leave a free field for the earl. I'm sure Geraldine likes you."

"That," I replied, "is as it may be."

"But everybody is talking."

"Let 'em talk."

"I must say I thought you had more spirit, Dick."

"Sorry, but I haven't," I replied. "Is that all?"

"No, that isn't all. The earl is with Geraldine every minute; he came to stay three days; he has already stayed a week, and shows no sign of leaving. If you are to win Geraldine, you've got to do something besides moon about the countryside astride a horse. What are you waiting for, anyway?"

"I'm waiting for the Judgment Day," I said; "but in the meantime I'm going for a ride. See you at dinner."

As I left the house for the stables, I was conscious of Rosalie staring after me with troubled eyes. Poor Rosalie! I really ought to have confided in her. But I'd had enough of confidences; I'd tried wearing my heart on my sleeve, and the daws had come from miles round to peck at it. From now on I resolved to be the very soul of reticence.

As I approached the stables, I heard wheels on the gravel behind me, and, turning, beheld a shabby surrey drawn by two wretched horses. It would have been a sight to dismiss with a glance had it not been that some one on the back seat of the surrey was waving his arms wildly. Could it be—— I stood still, and allowed the surrey to overtake me. Yes, there was no doubt of it; the man on the back seat was Beamer.

"Guess I'm not in luck," said that gentleman, descending from the surrey and wringing my hand. "First bit of luck I've had to-day."

"Er—you wish to see me?"

"You can better believe I want to see you! I've some important matters to talk over with you, Mr. Gatewood."

I sighed. I was hardly in the mood to talk over important matters with Beamer.

"I was just going for a ride," I said.

"Well, you can't go yet. I've simply got to have a talk with you."

"In that case," I said, "suppose we go down to the boathouse."

As we walked together across the lawn, I glanced appraisingly at my companion. Somehow, he seemed different

from the Beamer I was accustomed to. Ordinarily he radiated self-satisfaction and good humor, but to-day his eyes looked ominous, and his lips grim. I wondered what had happened. Surely something extraordinary must have happened to effect so complete a transformation. "He looks angry," I thought. "I believe he is angry."

Once at the boathouse, Beamer sat down on a bench, drew a long black cigar from his pocket, lighted it, and then said:

"Mr. Gatewood, I'm the maddest white man in the thirteen original States."

I smiled; I couldn't help it, for Beamer reminded me of an absurd cupid—pink, and white, and angry, ready to slay with the arrows of his wrath.

"Yes," continued Beamer; "I'm mad clean through. It's that darned earl of mine."

This time I laughed aloud.

"What's the matter with your darned earl?" I asked.

"Everything's the matter," replied Beamer. "And it ain't funny, either," he added reprovingly.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon for laughing," I said; "but you—you look so fierce, and——"

"You can bet your life I'm fierce!" said Beamer. "I'm mad as a hornet!"

"Or as a hatter," I amended, smiling.

"There you go again," complained Beamer. "Can't you be serious?"

"Is the business that brought you here serious?"

"Foolish question one million and twenty-three. Of course it's serious. Didn't I tell you that darned earl of mine has laid down on me again?"

"No, you didn't."

"Well, then, I'll tell you now. He's laid down on me good and hard. He's already overstayed his time four days, and he's just told me he expects to stop here for another week."

"Porchester is a pleasant place," I said.

"But he can't stay! I've got him booked through the West. He's due at

Colorado Springs next Sunday, and he won't budge!"

"Well, of course, if he won't budge, he won't," I said.

"He's got to budge. Do I look like a gink who would sit by quietly and lose a thousand dollars a day?"

"No, you don't," I replied truthfully. "But aren't you exaggerating your profits? Surely the earl comes in for at least two hundred and fifty of that thousand."

"What the earl gets is my business. The point is he's got to leave Porchester, and you're the man to help me make him leave."

"Look here, Beamer," I said; "you're an amusing and amazing little man, but there's such a thing as presuming too far. I advise you not to count too much on me."

"Oh, rats!" said Beamer. "You make me tired! Wouldn't it be as much to your advantage as to mine to get the earl out of Porchester?"

"If so, I can't see it," I replied coldly.

"He can't see it!" said Beamer, addressing the world at large. "He doesn't know the earl is cutting him out?"

"That will do," I said. "If, as you suggest, the earl is cutting me out, that's my business, not yours."



"Yes," said the earl.

"What the devil did you mean by renting me out?"

"The earl's gone clean batty about Miss Carter."

"I honor him for his good taste."

"He ain't good enough for her."

"Few men are," I replied.

"But I tell you he's got to go West with me."

"Why tell me? I have nothing to do with the earl's affairs, and from now on I intend to have nothing to do with yours."

"Oh, yes, you will!" said Beamer.

"You're not through with me yet, not by a long shot. I've just seen Mrs. Sanderson Burr, and I told her straight that

if she didn't pay me for the extra days the earl has visited her, I'd make it hot for her."

"You little beast!" I said. "I've a notion to throw you in the river."

"You just try it," said Beamer. "But, come, what's the use of scrapping? I like you, Mr. Gatewood, I do honestly, and I want you to hear my side of this affair. Here it is in a nutshell. I made two propositions to Mrs. Sanderson Burr. One was that she pay me four thousand dollars, and give the earl to understand she didn't want him to remain as her guest any longer; the other was that she let him stay as long as she liked, provided she'd agree to pay me fifty thousand dollars in case the earl married Miss Carter. That was fair, wasn't it?"

"Fair?" I gasped. "It was outrageous!"

"That's what Mrs. Sanderson Burr said. But just listen to what I said. 'If you don't do one of these two things,' I said, 'I'll sell the whole story to one of the New York papers.'"

"What story?" I demanded.

"How she rented the earl from me; how she used him as a jimmy to break into society here—the whole works."

"But, man," I cried, "you're insane! If you were to do that, you'd kill the goose that lays your golden eggs!"

"Don't you suppose I know that? But the earl won't be worth a two-bit piece to me if I can't get him West pretty soon to keep the engagements I've booked for him there. Besides, you don't understand me, Mr. Gatewood. When I'm mad I go the limit. I'd kill a hundred geese, and cook 'em, too, rather than be done by a fat old frump like Mrs. Sanderson Burr. I would, so help me Moses!"

"And you would really sell that story to a New York paper?"

"Would I? You just watch me. It would be one of the biggest stories ever pulled off. I've got photographs of both Miss Carter and Mrs. Sanderson Burr; I've even got the check she gave me—I haven't cashed it yet. Make no mistake; if Mrs. Sanderson Burr doesn't change her mind about paying

me what she owes me before five o'clock, I'm off to New York, and you can take it from me, if I do go, there'll be a newspaper to-morrow morning with a story in it that will make your friends wish they'd never been born."

"There's where you're wrong," I said. "Nothing like that will happen."

"What are you going to do?"

"Never mind what I'm going to do. Where are you putting up?"

"I'm at the Red Lion Inn."

"Well, go back there. And don't you dare leave Porchester till you hear from me! Do you understand?"

"Sure I understand," said Beamer. "You're going to take a hand in the game yourself. I knew you would, or I wouldn't have come to you."

"But there's one thing you don't understand," I said. "If I'm unsuccessful in settling this matter to your satisfaction, and you publish that disgraceful story, I'll give you the worst thrashing you ever had in your life. Now, get out of here. If you don't, by Heaven I'll give you that thrashing now!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Now here was a pretty situation; Beamer turned blackmailer—for that is what it amounted to—and threatening to pillory Mrs. Sanderson Burr and Geraldine in the press. Something must be done, and at once. It was after three, and Beamer had only given Mrs. Sanderson Burr till five o'clock to change her mind. A train left for New York at fifteen minutes past five, I remembered. One thing was certain; unless the matter was settled satisfactorily before that time, Beamer should not be allowed to take that train, even if I had to detain him by force. Calling a groom, I ordered Rocket saddled, and was soon tearing toward the Villa Paradiso on the run; and as I rode I planned—and cursed the day I had ever met Beamer. Infamous little man!

The thing to do, I decided, was to see the earl. Once I had acquainted him with the situation, the situation would, I felt sure, cease to exist; he'd leave Porchester at once, and control

Beamer to the extent of making him desist from further persecution of poor Mrs. Sanderson Burr. Somehow, I was convinced the earl would do the right thing. He didn't know, he couldn't know what Beamer had been up to. Yes, that was the way out of the difficulty, to appeal to the earl. But when I arrived at the Villa Paradiso, and asked for the earl, I was told that he and Geraldine had gone for a ride.

"May I use your telephone?" I asked.

"Certainly, Mr. Gatewood."

I rang up the Country Club. No, the earl was not there.

I now turned to the servant who had let me in.

"Please call up the stables," I said, "and see if any one there knows where Lord Carmondale went this afternoon. It is important that I should find him at once."

The servant did as I requested, but, alas! no one at the stables knew where the earl had gone. I glanced at my watch; it was twenty minutes to four, and I must be with Beamer at five. There was nothing for it now but to see Mrs. Sanderson Burr.

Here more difficulties arose. Mrs. Sanderson Burr was in, but begged to be excused, as she was suffering from a severe headache.

"I must see her," I said. "I will go into the library, and write her a note."

It was a difficult note to write. When finished it read as follows:

DEAR MRS. SANDERSON BURR: I was in Monte Carlo last year, and learned, then, of Beamer's arrangements with the earl. Of course I have never breathed a word of this to any one, and should be the last to come to you at this time if I were not sure I could help you.

I need hardly add that I am prompted in this matter solely by the sincere regard and friendship I feel for both yourself and Miss Carter.

RICHARD GATEWOOD.

This note sealed and dispatched to Mrs. Sanderson Burr, I did some tall thinking. Naturally I expected little help from Geraldine's aunt. But this much she could do; she could send the earl to me at the Red Lion Inn as soon as he returned from his ride. He would probably find me sitting on Beamer in

Beamer's room at the inn, but that was a mere detail; the main thing was that I must see the earl before Beamer was allowed to depart from Porchester. Also, what I had to say to Mrs. Sanderson Burr could not help but reassure her. I pictured the black despair that must have fallen upon her, and was sorry for her from the bottom of my heart.

The servant now appeared, and informed me that his mistress would be down in a moment. Soon after, Mrs. Sanderson Burr entered the library; she wore a tea gown of old rose, and I could see that she had been weeping.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Gatewood," she said. "It was kind of you to come to me at this time. I have been very foolish, and am, at present, most unhappy."

"I think there is no reason for you to be unhappy," I replied.

"Ah, but you don't know!"

"I know everything; I have just seen Beamer."

"Then he has changed his mind?"

"Not yet. But I'm confident he will."

"You don't know him, or you wouldn't say that. He's bent on revenge now, and nothing will stop him, unless— But I won't be blackmailed. I'm in a frightful position, Mr. Gatewood. The only excuse I can offer for being in such a position is that no woman likes to feel she is an outsider. Had I known what I must endure here in Porchester, I should never have built this house. But I did build it, and I did come here to live; it wasn't till then that I found what a huge mistake I'd made. No one called on me; I was absolutely ignored. That hurt, for I am naturally a sociable creature, and like to make friends. Then that terrible Beamer came and tempted me, and I ended by renting the earl from him. And now he would blackmail me. I won't be blackmailed! I won't!"

"But you can give the earl to understand his presence here is distasteful to you."

"No. I've thought it all out; I can't do that, either."

"My dear Mrs. Sanderson Burr, that's absurd!"

"It may be absurd, but I can't do it. I like the earl, and I couldn't humiliate him by asking him to leave. After all, he is my guest, and has been for the past four days. Furthermore, I believe he'd be furiously angry if he knew what Beamer was attempting."

"I believe he'd be angry, too," I said, "and you may rest assured that I will stop at nothing short of murder to keep the article Beamer threatens to publish out of the newspapers. All I ask of you is that you send the earl to me the moment he arrives. I shall be at the Red Lion Inn; probably in Beamer's room."

"What do you mean to do?"

"That," I said, "need not concern you. You can wash your hands of the whole affair; hereafter I alone am responsible."

"No harm must come to the earl."

"No harm shall come to him if he behaves himself. I am here to look out for you and Miss Carter; the earl must look out for himself. If he behaves like a gentleman, he'll be treated like one."

"He is a gentleman in so many ways."

"That is true," I said. "But please do not forget the fact that he isn't a gentleman; he gave up all title to that word when he entered into his agreement with Beamer. He's not a gentleman; he's a rented earl."

As I said this I became aware of a startled look on Mrs. Sanderson Burr's face. Following her eyes, I glanced toward the door. There stood Geraldine, pale and slender, her eyes flashing fire. I rose hastily.

"Don't let me disturb you," said Geraldine, in a cutting voice. "Please go on with what you were saying."

"I'd finished," I replied.

"Then I think you'd better leave this house."

"Geraldine!"

"Aunt Caroline, will you please tell Mr. Gatewood he is no longer welcome here?"

"I can't, my dear. What he said about the earl is the truth."

"And I say it's a lie! The Earl of

Carmondale is a gentleman—first, last, and always. This afternoon he did me the honor to ask me to marry him, and I was very happy. I came home at once to tell you, and—and——"

"My dear Miss Carter," I said, "if you are engaged to the earl, I have nothing further to say."

"No," said Mrs. Sanderson Burr, as I rose to go, "the child must hear the truth. The earl is a rented earl, Geraldine. I rented him myself from a man named Beamer."

"I will not believe it."

"But I tell you it's true. Mr. Gatewood is here to render me a great service. I rented the earl for three days; he has been here a week, and to-day Beamer tried to blackmail me, threatening to sell all the facts to a New York newspaper if I did not pay him four thousand dollars more."

"But," said Geraldine, "I know this can't be true. Jack is a poor man; he has almost nothing. We are going to be married, and live on my ranch in Colorado."

"If you mean to marry him," replied her aunt, "you must know what sort of man he is."

"I do know. I know he would be incapable of renting himself out." She laughed scornfully.

"Did the earl return when you did?" I asked.

"Yes. He's gone to his room to change."

"Then," I said, "suppose we send for him."

"Very well," replied Geraldine, "I'll send for him. But I warn you you will find it a different matter to repeat your lies to him. And I shall insist on your repeating them—every word."

With this she crossed the room, and touched a bell.

Mrs. Sanderson Burr gazed after her sorrowfully.

"Ah, if I'd only known!" she said. "If I'd only known!"

"I do know, Aunt Caroline. I have nothing to fear."

She made a beautiful picture standing there, so straight, and young, and resolute. To think that a boulder of an

earl could inspire such trust! In another moment her castle in the air would come tumbling about her ears, and life would seem very desolate indeed. My heart bled for Geraldine.

CHAPTER XV.

We waited for the earl in silence, Geraldine white and resolute, Mrs. Sanderson Burr resolute and depressed. As for myself, I was most unhappy. Why must I be included in this tragedy? For it was a tragedy. "The Rented Earl," staged as a farce comedy, had taken an unexpected turn. And now for the dénouement.

Poor Geraldine! Soon her world would be empty, her idol turned to dust. I meant to be fair, but I burned with resentment toward the earl. He was as bad as Beamer. Worse! Beamer had but tried to walk off with Mrs. Sanderson Burr's pocketbook; the earl had stolen Geraldine's heart.

Of course, Geraldine might prove what the world calls "sensible"; she might be willing to marry a man who had rented himself out to her aunt. But, somehow, I couldn't believe she would prove "sensible" where her affections were engaged. No, she would be deeply wounded, and carry a scar for many and many a day.

Gayly, with a smile on his lips, the earl entered the library, bowed to Mrs. Sanderson Burr, nodded to me, then went straight to Geraldine, who was standing by the fireplace.

"You sent for me?" he asked.

"Yes," she murmured.

"How are you, Gatewood? Glad to see you."

The earl now crossed the room, and extended his hand.

"Not now," I said, putting my right hand behind me.

A look of wonder passed over his lordship's face. Then, screwing his monocle into his eye, he favored me with a benumbing stare.

"Oh," he said; "it's like that, is it?"

"Yes," I replied; "it's like that."

"Don't mind him, Jack," said Geraldine. "He is going to leave this house

in a few minutes, never to return. I sent for you because Mr. Gatewood has laid an extraordinary charge against you—a charge so foolish that it would be funny if it weren't insulting. Mr. Gatewood declares you were rented to my aunt at so much a day."

"What?"

"Mr. Gatewood charges you with renting yourself out to people."

"Oh, I say," exclaimed his lordship, "this is a rum go. Is it a joke, or something?"

"No," I replied; "it isn't a joke."

"Then it's a lie; a thumping lie!"

"That's what I told Mr. Gatewood."

"You're a good actor, Carmondale," I said, "but you might as well realize that acting will not help you."

"I may or may not be a good actor," replied his lordship, "but I am a gentleman, and what you say is both grotesque and untrue."

"I'm sorry to disagree with you," said Mrs. Sanderson Burr. "I should know, if any one does, for I rented you myself."

"You? You rented *me*? My dear Geraldine, your aunt is insane!"

"I think I must have been insane to rent you," replied Mrs. Sanderson Burr, "but I did; I rented you from your manager, Beamer, and paid a thousand dollars a day for you."

"Rented me from Beamer? Impossible!"

"You dare question Mrs. Sanderson Burr's word?"

"I—er—I don't know," responded the earl. "It—it seems incredible. Why should I be rented out?"

"It is characteristic of this glorious and democratic country," I said, "that earls and other titled creatures are in immense demand. Indeed, the demand so far exceeds the supply that an earl who is willing to rent himself out by the day can command almost any price."

"I see," said the earl. "But how could Beamer rent me out without my knowing it?"

"If you ask me, I don't believe he could," I replied.

"He could because he did," declared Geraldine.

"This is nonsense," I said, addressing the earl. "Why don't you own up?"

The earl ignored my question completely.

"I give you my word of honor I had no idea of this," he said, turning to Geraldine.

"I know you hadn't, dear."

"My niece may be convinced, but I am far from convinced," said Mrs. Sanderson Burr.

"But, hang it all, this is utter rot! I met Beamer in Monte Carlo last winter."

"I know you did," I said. "I was there. Not only that, but Beamer told me he meant to bring you over here and rent you out before he'd even met you."

"Oh, come," exclaimed his lordship; "that's a bit too thick!"

"You doubt my word?" I demanded. "Yes, since you ask me," replied his lordship coolly.

"So do I," said Geraldine.

"This is most unfortunate," murmured Mrs. Sanderson Burr.

"It may or may not be unfortunate," I declared. "But one thing is plain: either the earl is a scoundrel, or else I am."

"I am certainly not a scoundrel," said the earl.

"No more am I," I responded hotly.

"Prove it," said Geraldine.

That I was surprised at the sudden turn the affair had taken was to put it mildly; I was thoroughly exasperated.

"You ask for proof," I said, looking straight at Geraldine. "Very well, you shall have it. Mrs. Sanderson Burr, may I borrow your motor?"

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, I shall tell you what use I mean to put it to," I said. "I intend to go to the Red Lion Inn, and get Beamer."

"What?" exclaimed his lordship. "Is Beamer in Porchester?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Then go and get him, by all means."

"May I be assured you will remain here till I return with him?" I asked.

This question proved too much for the earl.

"Confound you, Gatewood!" he cried, taking a step toward me.

"Don't mind him, dear," said Geraldine. "I think I understand why he is so vindictive."

I knew at once what Geraldine meant; she imagined I was jealous of the earl. I could have laughed aloud. Instead, I prevailed upon Mrs. Sanderson Burr to order her motor sent round at once. Five minutes later I was on my way to the Red Lion Inn.

I found Beamer in his room, his bag packed, all ready to take the five-o'clock train.

"Hello!" he said, as he opened the door in answer to my knock. "I kinda thought I'd see you before I left town. Any news from the castle on the hill?"

"Yes," I replied. "I want you to go there with me now, and talk things over."

"Nix on the talk thing," said Beamer. "Money is what I'm after."

"Still, I think you'd better come with me," I said. "Mrs. Sanderson Burr sent her motor down on purpose to fetch you."

"Then she's changed her mind?"

"Yes, in a way."

"You mean she'll come through with the coin?"

"She has decided that the article you propose to sell to a New York paper must not be published," I replied.

"Well, if she's decided that, the rest should be easy. All right; I'll go."

We made the trip in silence. From the contented expression on Beamer's face, I hadn't a doubt but that he was planning how he would spend the money he was to receive from Mrs. Sanderson Burr. As for myself, I was wondering if the earl could possibly escape the snare I'd laid for him; it would be quite another matter to explain Beamer with Beamer present. I smiled, I fear a bit vindictively. It was all very well to feel sorry for Geraldine, but just at present I was sympathizing with myself. I had been placed in a horrid position; the honesty of my intentions had been challenged, my word disputed. But just wait till Geraldine heard what Beamer had to say!

The door from the terrace was open,

and we entered the Villa Paradiso without ceremony.

"This way," I said, and leading Beamer to the library, stepped aside for him to enter, then entered myself, closing the door behind me.

"Now," I said, "we'll have some explanations. I believe, Beamer, you have the honor of Lord Carmondale's acquaintance."

"Yes," said Beamer, favoring me with a murderous glance, "but I came here to have a talk with Mrs. Sanderson Burr."

"You are mistaken, my dear Beamer," I replied gravely. "You came here to tell Lord Carmondale a few things which he seems to have forgotten."

"Yes," said the earl. "What the devil did you mean by renting me out?"

"But that was our arrangement, my lord."

"You lie! We had no such arrangement! When I came to America with you it was with the understanding that you were to set me up with a ranch to be run on shares."

"Your lordship is mistaken."

"I'm not mistaken, you little blackguard, and you know it!"

Beamer shrugged his shoulders.

"Have it your own way," he said.

Whether it was his manner of shrugging his shoulders, or the expression on his face, I can't say, but something told me Beamer was lying. It would be to his advantage to lie—tremendously! If he admitted renting the earl without the earl's knowledge, he could be forced to return all the money he had received from the various people whom he had victimized. I looked at the earl, then at Beamer; I remembered how honorably the earl had acted when he'd imagined I was in love with Geraldine. I was about to ask Beamer a question, when Geraldine took a hand in the game:

"Please tell us, Mr. Beamer, your version of the affair."

"Why, it was like this, Miss Carter. I met the earl at Monte Carlo last winter, as Mr. Gatewood knows, and I offered him the chance of coming over here and picking up some easy money.

He jumped at the chance, and I've been renting him out ever since. Ask your aunt; she knows."

"That will do. Now, Jack, tell us your version."

"I've already told it," said the earl. "I came to the States to go in for ranching; Beamer promised to set me up with a ranch out West, and let me run it on shares."

"But you didn't go West."

"No. When we arrived in New York, Beamer discovered business that would keep him in the East for a few weeks."

"So you made some visits."

"Yes, I visited some of Beamer's friends, if that's what you mean."

"Did you think, for instance, that Aunt Caroline was one of Mr. Beamer's friends?"

"He told me she was, and she invited me to visit her."

"Yes, that's true," said Mrs. Sanderson Burr. "At Mr. Beamer's suggestion, I wrote to the earl, and invited him to pay me a visit. But it was understood that he was to leave at the end of three days."

"Indeed, I didn't know that!" said the earl. "I'm no end sorry if I've overstayed my welcome."

"Overstayed it by four thousand dollars' worth," I said. "Beamer has been trying to collect that amount from your hostess."

"Is that the truth?" demanded the earl, turning to Mrs. Sanderson Burr.

"Yes. Not only that, but he has threatened to make a scandal if I do not meet his demands."

"But this is horrible! I shall, of course, leave your house at once."

"No, you won't," said Geraldine.

"I must. I know this is neither the time nor place to say it, but I love your niece, Mrs. Sanderson Burr, and I mean to marry her. But the very first thing I do will be to force Beamer to return every penny he received from you."

"Oh, you will, will you?" Beamer said.

"Yes," replied the earl. "I most decidedly will."

"You'd better not," threatened Beamer. "Think of the scandal!"

"There will be no scandal," I said. "If there is, a warrant will be sworn out against you for obtaining money under false pretenses."

"H'm!" said Beamer. "I guess you've got me there. But between you and me, it would be pretty mean, wouldn't it, if any of you were to carry tales to the people that have already rented the earl? You can count on their never telling; it ain't the kind of thing people tell on themselves."

"What? Do you think I'm going to let those people believe I was a party to your renting me out?" demanded the earl.

"You'd better," said Beamer. "The story is bound to leak out and get into the newspapers if you don't. What I say is, let's be friends, and leave sleeping dogs lie. Maybe I did play it kind of low-down on you, but, jumping cats, that's no reason why the whole world should know it!"

"I think Beamer is right," I said.

"I'm sure of it," said Mrs. Sanderson Burr.

"You can count on my never breathing it to a soul," continued Beamer. "Give you my word of honor."

The sight of the unscrupulous Beamer solemnly pledging his word of honor proved too much for us; none of us could refrain from smiling.

"There," said Beamer; "glad to see you all cheerful again. Hope your lordship will be happy. Same to you, Miss Carter. Regards, Mrs. Sanderson Burr."

With this, the amazing little man walked coolly from the library.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the earl. "There's cheek, if you like. Shall we go after him, Gatewood?"

"No," said Geraldine, "you're both to remain here."

"But he's walked off with Mrs. Sanderson Burr's check for three thousand dollars," I objected.

"Let him keep it. To have things turn out as they did is worth ten times the amount."

"I hate to let Beamer walk off with all that money," I said. "Ah, I have it: you can telephone to your bank, and stop payment on the check."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Sanderson Burr, "I can do that."

But, somehow, I don't believe she did.

"And now," I said, "I must apologize to you, Carmondale. I hope you'll understand that I acted from the best of motives, and beg you'll forgive me for believing, even for a minute, that you were capable of the conduct I attributed to you."

"My dear fellow, not another word," said the earl.

"And you?" I asked, turning to Geraldine.

"I—I don't know."

"Remember, Geraldine, he came to me when I was in trouble, and tried to help me."

"Yes, Aunt Caroline."

"I say, Geraldine, aren't we too happy to send a good chap like Gatewood away without thanking him for what he tried to do?"

"Yes," replied Geraldine, "we are. Thank you, Mr. Gatewood."

She gave me her hand, and with it, as I was to learn later, her forgiveness.

"I'm very grateful," I said. "I've made a sad mess of things, and—and — I must be going now. Good afternoon."

"I'll go with you as far as the terrace," said Mrs. Sanderson Burr.

We left Geraldine and the earl alone in the library.

CHAPTER XVI.

I rode away from the Villa Paradiso with much the same feeling that one leaves a theater after witnessing an interesting play, for with the exit of the friend of the family and the intriguing aunt, the curtain had been rung down on the last act of "The Rented Earl." Though unusual in some respects, it had proved but a conventional comedy, after all; the villain had been properly foiled, virtue had triumphed, and the hero and heroine would now marry and live hap-

pily ever after, or at least one supposed they would. Also, the intriguing aunt would fare astonishingly well. A real, live earl for a nephew-in-law! Not a bad return for an investment of three thousand dollars.

On the whole, then, Beamer had turned out to be a philanthropist in disguise. Finding the ship of Mrs. Sanderson Burr's social fortunes on the rocks of Porchester's disdain, he had, using the earl as a cable, warped it into the harbor of Porchester's esteem; and now, unless she tried to carry too much sail, his late client was safe for a prosperous voyage to the isles of social prominence. Yes, decidedly, Beamer had proved useful to her.

In a way, he had been useful to me, too. If he hadn't rented the earl to Mrs. Sanderson Burr, there wouldn't have been any fancy-dress ball, and then — Well, then Maudie and I wouldn't have made the journey to New York together. A happy thought came to me. Why shouldn't I ride over to Merry-mount, and tell Maudie of Geraldine's engagement to the earl? What better opportunity could I find to convince her that I wasn't in love with Geraldine? By George, I'd do it! So, instead of riding on to Puddleston Hall, I turned into the River Road, and cantered toward Merrymount.

I found Maudie seated in a wicker chair on her veranda, reading a garden book.

"Pray don't get up," I said, as she rose to greet me.

She smiled.

"I have been reading a book on bulbs," she said. "What have you been doing?"

"Oh, I've been doing all sorts of

things! But nothing so pleasant as this."

"You'll have tea?"

"No, I don't want tea. What I covet is your undivided attention; I've news to tell."

"News? I didn't know anything ever happened in Porchester."

"Something happened this afternoon. The earl proposed to Geraldine Carter, and was accepted."

"I—I'm sorry."

"Why should you be sorry?"

"If you don't know, I shan't tell you," Maudie replied. "Do you happen to be interested in bulbs, Mr. Gatewood? This book says——"

"Bother what the book says! I want to know why you're sorry."

"Because—— But this is absurd!"

"No, it isn't. I insist on knowing why you are sorry."

"If you must know, I'm sorry for you."

"So you thought me in love with Geraldine Carter?"

"I knew you were."

"I wasn't, and I'm not," I replied. "If you really wish to know whom I'm in love with, I'll tell you. I'm in love——"

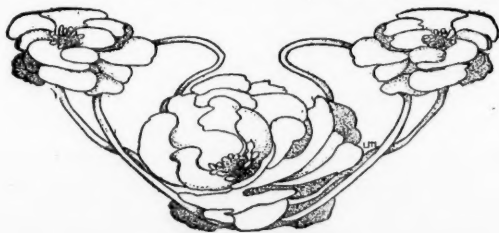
"Never mind," interrupted Maudie hastily.

"I'm in love with *you*," I said. "Yes, I am," I continued, as she made a gesture of protest. "I'm in love with *you*, and if you'd be so good as to look at me, you'd see I was telling the truth."

"But I thought——"

"So did Rosalie, so did everybody; but that doesn't alter the fact. I love *you*."

"Well," said Maudie, "if you really mean it, I think I could find it in my heart to ask you to stay to dinner."



LOST MOTION

By Edwin L. Sabin

IN Dana's classic narrative, "Two Years Before the Mast," an old sailor makes a striking remark. From the deck viewing the snowy spread of canvas aloft, as the swelling sails force the good ship through the water, he says, half to himself:

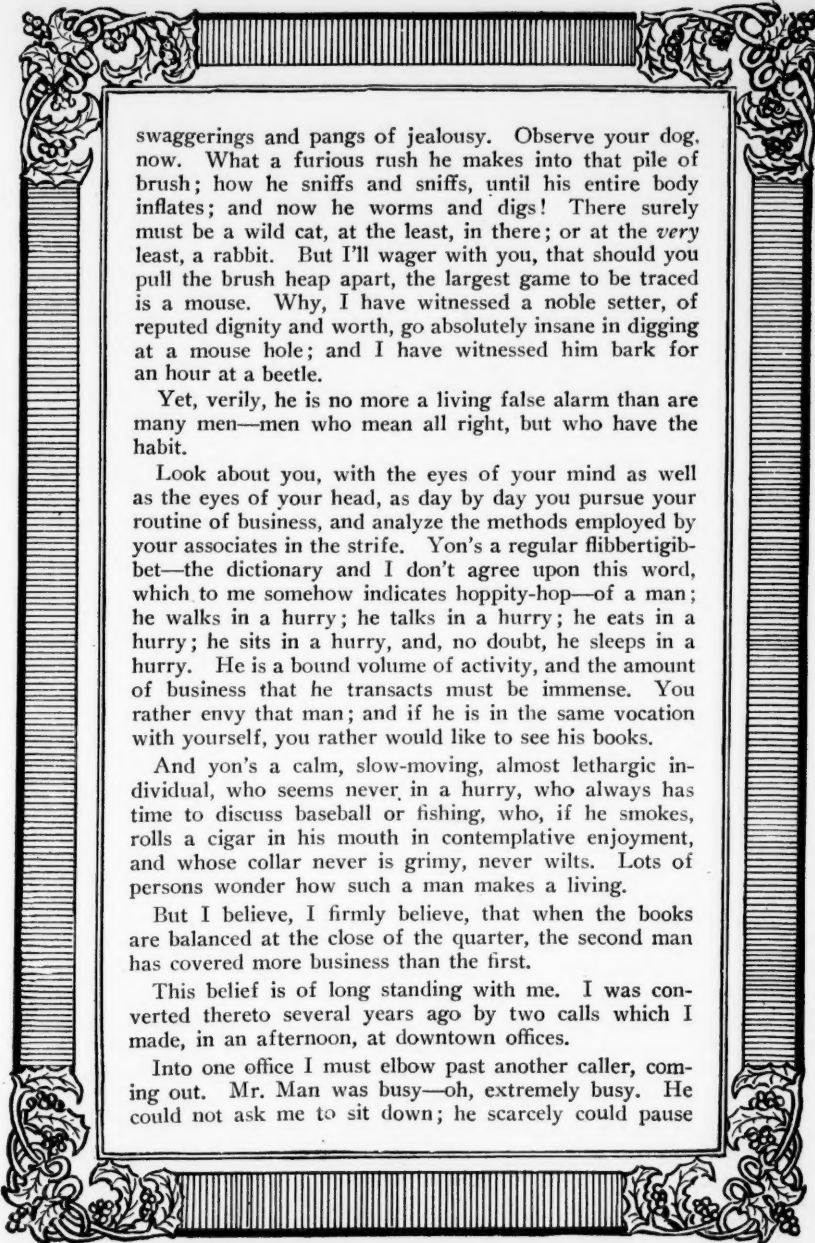
"How quietly they do their work!"

"How quietly they do their work!" In quietude there always is a sense of power. We note it in the long roll of the incoming surf before it breaks; we note it in the mighty uplift of the mountain where cloud shadows are only specks; we note it in the steady swing of the steam crane carrying tons of metal and gently depositing them again; we note it in the surge of the ocean steamer nearing the dock, and we note it in some men.

Most of us work under the disadvantage of lost motion. Lost motion is a horror of good mechanics—a sort of boggy, you know. Lost motion implies wasted energy, but it is worse than merely wasted energy, for the energy may be converted and made useful, whereas the lost motion is the tares in the wheat field of endeavor.

No doubt we are of the opinion that our lost motion achieves results. Some of us are roosters, hullabalooing over a single seed which we would magnify into a pocket of corn; some of us are the little dog digging furiously at an inch-deep hole; some of us are the boy who, to run, must first snatch off his hat. Our lost motion is a general appeal, an habitual bluff, a "One for the money, two for the show, three to make ready, and four to go."

Observe your little dog—yes, and your big one, too—when next you take him out to walk. As Robert Louis Stevenson states, in his most human essay upon dogs, the dog is the arrant bluffer, and pretender, and liar of the animal world. His whole domestic life is devoted to courting attention from mankind or from other dogs, to



swaggerings and pangs of jealousy. Observe your dog, now. What a furious rush he makes into that pile of brush; how he sniffs and sniffs, until his entire body inflates; and now he worms and digs! There surely must be a wild cat, at the least, in there; or at the *very* least, a rabbit. But I'll wager with you, that should you pull the brush heap apart, the largest game to be traced is a mouse. Why, I have witnessed a noble setter, of reputed dignity and worth, go absolutely insane in digging at a mouse hole; and I have witnessed him bark for an hour at a beetle.

Yet, verily, he is no more a living false alarm than are many men—men who mean all right, but who have the habit.

Look about you, with the eyes of your mind as well as the eyes of your head, as day by day you pursue your routine of business, and analyze the methods employed by your associates in the strife. Yon's a regular flibbertigibbet—the dictionary and I don't agree upon this word, which to me somehow indicates hoppity-hop—of a man; he walks in a hurry; he talks in a hurry; he eats in a hurry; he sits in a hurry, and, no doubt, he sleeps in a hurry. He is a bound volume of activity, and the amount of business that he transacts must be immense. You rather envy that man; and if he is in the same vocation with yourself, you rather would like to see his books.

And yon's a calm, slow-moving, almost lethargic individual, who seems never in a hurry, who always has time to discuss baseball or fishing, who, if he smokes, rolls a cigar in his mouth in contemplative enjoyment, and whose collar never is grimy, never wilts. Lots of persons wonder how such a man makes a living.

But I believe, I firmly believe, that when the books are balanced at the close of the quarter, the second man has covered more business than the first.

This belief is of long standing with me. I was converted thereto several years ago by two calls which I made, in an afternoon, at downtown offices.

Into one office I must elbow past another caller, coming out. Mr. Man was busy—oh, extremely busy. He could not ask me to sit down; he scarcely could pause

in his dictation to a stenographer; his tie was loose, his collar soiled, his eyes dark, he was strenuously on tip-toe.

"Are you Mr. Man?" I asked.

"Yes, sir. What do you want?" He barked rapidly, without punctuation.

I was awed; I shrank; my mind became confused before such dynamic force; I was not prepared to battle for time.

"I am Mr. Sabin. I wanted to talk a moment——"

"What do you want? You must tell me what you want. Miss Brown, take this letter, please." He grabbed the desk phone. "Blue four-six-three-five." He pressed a call bell. "Take that package down to the printers," he directed, to the slavey who responded. He glared at me—receiver to ear, stenographer expectant. "Hurry up. I'm busy."

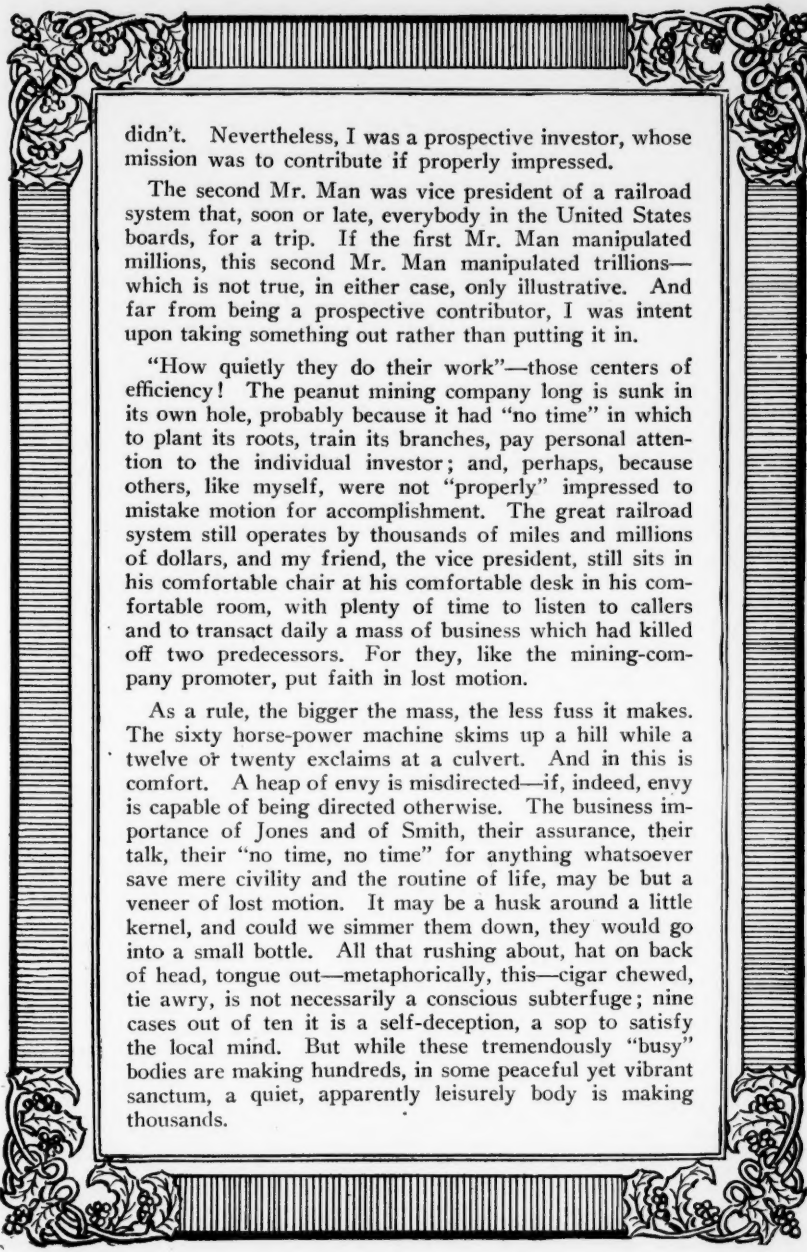
"I'll call again," I ventured.

"All right. Miss Brown——" And I was dismissed, out to sidle, thoroughly impressed—for the moment—with my insignificance in the midst of such vast affairs.

But at the next office I had a real nice time. As I progressed, there was an easy-chair awaiting; there was a courteous youth, who said that he "would see"; there was a courtly, well-groomed man sitting comfortably at a polished desk; there was a cordial, leisurely hand-grasp, and another easy-chair—and no hurry. No, no hurry. This Mr. Man did not demand of me, by word or peremptory mien, what I "wanted," although, of course, I told him. But he gave careful attention to what I would say, and we discussed it, and a mutual acquaintance or two, and, perhaps, fishing or the weather; I don't remember. And all the time I was conscious, but not made conscious, of the steady, noiseless whirling of wheels, and wheels within wheels, just beyond the threshold. However, they did not try to run over me.

When I was politely bowed out, I felt as though I had had a pleasant call, and I also had the sense of accomplishment—of a nail driven home.

The first Mr. Man was organizer of a wild-cat mining company, which was presumed to deal in millions and

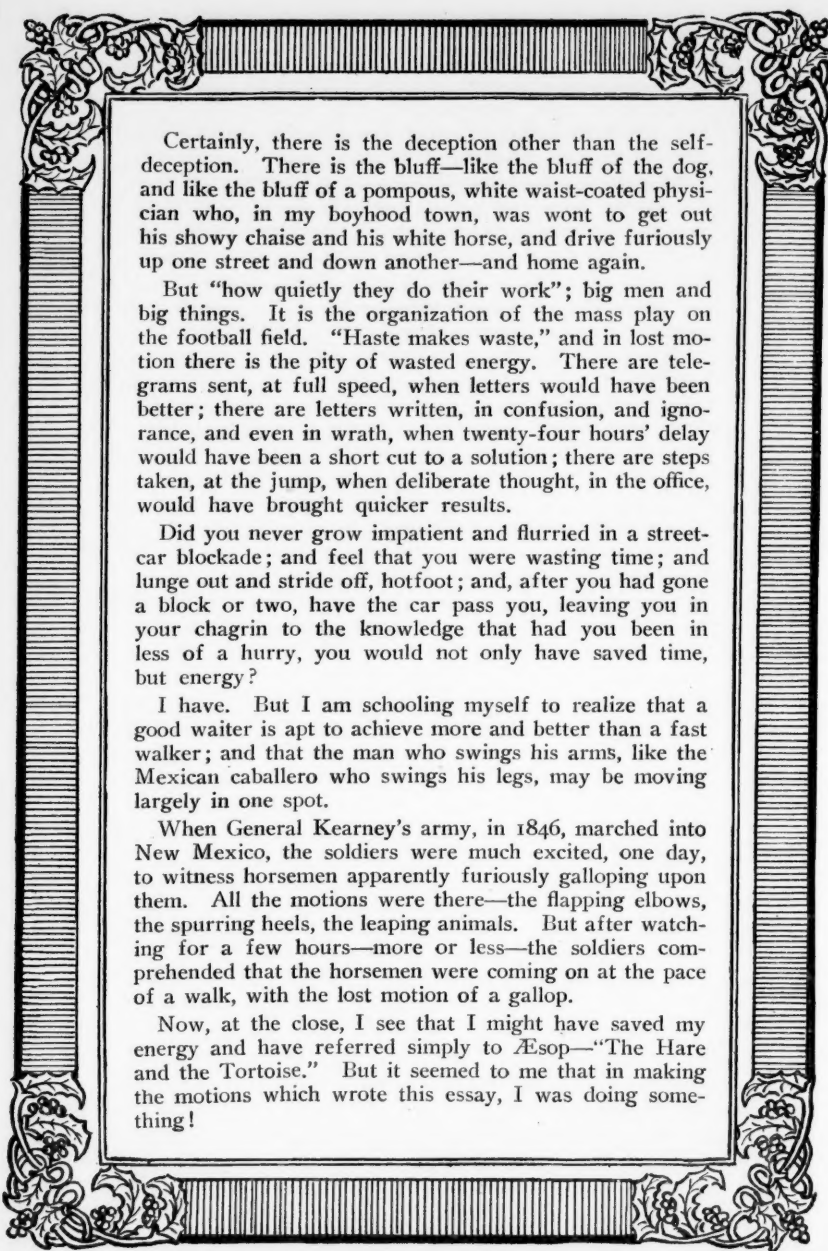


didn't. Nevertheless, I was a prospective investor, whose mission was to contribute if properly impressed.

The second Mr. Man was vice president of a railroad system that, soon or late, everybody in the United States boards, for a trip. If the first Mr. Man manipulated millions, this second Mr. Man manipulated trillions—which is not true, in either case, only illustrative. And far from being a prospective contributor, I was intent upon taking something out rather than putting it in.

"How quietly they do their work"—those centers of efficiency! The peanut mining company long is sunk in its own hole, probably because it had "no time" in which to plant its roots, train its branches, pay personal attention to the individual investor; and, perhaps, because others, like myself, were not "properly" impressed to mistake motion for accomplishment. The great railroad system still operates by thousands of miles and millions of dollars, and my friend, the vice president, still sits in his comfortable chair at his comfortable desk in his comfortable room, with plenty of time to listen to callers and to transact daily a mass of business which had killed off two predecessors. For they, like the mining-company promoter, put faith in lost motion.

As a rule, the bigger the mass, the less fuss it makes. The sixty horse-power machine skims up a hill while a twelve or twenty exclaims at a culvert. And in this is comfort. A heap of envy is misdirected—if, indeed, envy is capable of being directed otherwise. The business importance of Jones and of Smith, their assurance, their talk, their "no time, no time" for anything whatsoever save mere civility and the routine of life, may be but a veneer of lost motion. It may be a husk around a little kernel, and could we simmer them down, they would go into a small bottle. All that rushing about, hat on back of head, tongue out—metaphorically, this—cigar chewed, tie awry, is not necessarily a conscious subterfuge; nine cases out of ten it is a self-deception, a sop to satisfy the local mind. But while these tremendously "busy" bodies are making hundreds, in some peaceful yet vibrant sanctum, a quiet, apparently leisurely body is making thousands.



Certainly, there is the deception other than the self-deception. There is the bluff—like the bluff of the dog, and like the bluff of a pompous, white waist-coated physician who, in my boyhood town, was wont to get out his showy chaise and his white horse, and drive furiously up one street and down another—and home again.

But "how quietly they do their work"; big men and big things. It is the organization of the mass play on the football field. "Haste makes waste," and in lost motion there is the pity of wasted energy. There are telegrams sent, at full speed, when letters would have been better; there are letters written, in confusion, and ignorance, and even in wrath, when twenty-four hours' delay would have been a short cut to a solution; there are steps taken, at the jump, when deliberate thought, in the office, would have brought quicker results.

Did you never grow impatient and flurried in a street-car blockade; and feel that you were wasting time; and lunge out and stride off, hotfoot; and, after you had gone a block or two, have the car pass you, leaving you in your chagrin to the knowledge that had you been in less of a hurry, you would not only have saved time, but energy?

I have. But I am schooling myself to realize that a good waiter is apt to achieve more and better than a fast walker; and that the man who swings his arms, like the Mexican caballero who swings his legs, may be moving largely in one spot.

When General Kearney's army, in 1846, marched into New Mexico, the soldiers were much excited, one day, to witness horsemen apparently furiously galloping upon them. All the motions were there—the flapping elbows, the spurring heels, the leaping animals. But after watching for a few hours—more or less—the soldiers comprehended that the horsemen were coming on at the pace of a walk, with the lost motion of a gallop.

Now, at the close, I see that I might have saved my energy and have referred simply to Æsop—"The Hare and the Tortoise." But it seemed to me that in making the motions which wrote this essay, I was doing something!



The Cherry Satin Gown

By MARION SHORT

Author of "The Famous Cochran Children," "Mrs. Fahrendell's Musicales," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

HHEY, you show people, you're to take this bus!"

Mrs. Cochran shuddered at the unwelcome sobriquet of "show people." She looked about her to see if any one else on the station platform had noticed the loud words of the lanky youth. When it seemed that they had not, an amused smile banished the pucker between her brows. She turned to Miss Sheldon, the elocutionist, walking along at her right.

"Show people! Did you ever? Anybody'd think we'd landed in Wellington to jump through paper hoops, 'stead of to give a high-class lyceum entertainment."

As her eyes fell on the short, stout figure of Madame Sigel-Ganz, a few feet ahead of them, she gave a rueful laugh.

"I don't like to speak disrespectful of any one, Miss Sheldon, but our prima donna does sort of look like she was leadin' a hoop-jumpin' procession, the way she's got herself up."

The prima donna's gown was a bright purple in color, and of fanciful cut. Her huge yellow satin hat was surmounted by a long, upstanding purple plume. The hat had slipped awry as a result of madame's morning siesta on the train, and the stiffened feather slumped off at a weird angle of uncertainty. As she stopped and turned toward them, her face proved as disturbed and distressful of appearance as her headgear.

"Miss Sheldon, where it is—my trunk?" she inquired. She was a singer

of German lieder, and spoke with a slight German accent, which increased under excitement.

"I think they did not throw it off the train. I think it goes on already without me to—I don't know where! How is it to know when I get it back? If it is lost, I have nothing to wear, and I cannot sing to-night. What is to do then?"

Dismayed, the various members of the concert party looked up and down the platform.

"It's true—there's no trunk here!" exclaimed Mrs. Cochran. "Not a scrap of baggage in sight, except the suit cases belonging to the rest of us."

Madame Sigel-Ganz sank down disconsolately on a baggage truck.

"I think I will just wait on this spot, and take a train back to New York. What is the use—if I remain I cannot sing. Tell them, please, that I cancel my engagement. Tell them I am run over by the railroad. Tell them—anything! My disgust—it is unspeakable!"

"Oh, you mustn't give up like that," said Miss Sheldon soothingly. "You'll do well enough for the matinée gowned as you are, and perhaps by night your trunk will arrive. It may get in on a later section of the train we were on—if there is a later section," she added uncertainly.

Little Verdant put her violin case in her mother's hand, and made a running detour of the station. Returning, she shook her head. She had seen nothing of the missing trunk.

For a few moments Madame Sigel-



Madame Sigel-Ganz sank down disconsolately on a baggage truck.

Ganz sat motionless, surrounded by silent sympathizers. Upon them all had fallen that sense of helplessness that lies between the acceptance of a dilemma and the forming of plans to lessen its force.

The lanky boy driver whistled a bit, and flected a worn whip. His vehicle was backed up to the curb; the train had gone; what were they waiting for?

"Well, there's one thing certain," observed Miss Sheldon finally. "There's nothing to be gained by staying around here. The agent will be expecting us at the Wellington House, and I think we'd better be going."

As she spoke, she recalled the letter he had written her when arranging for the concert:

The womenfolk here in Wellington will all be sizing up the clothes you ladies wear, so please make a point of this and bring along your showiest costumes.

It was to be the initial entertainment of the Wellington high-school course, and she realized that the loss of madame's trunk containing her evening gown might prove no small handicap to the general success of the evening, and would certainly cause the agent serious embarrassment.

When they reached the hotel he was

there waiting for them, and as soon as they registered led the way into the musty hotel parlor. It was a long room with a sagging ceiling and uneven floor, and it only remained for a glance at the pictures hanging in varying degrees of crookedness on the wall to complete an uneasy illusion of shipboard and an uncertain sea.

As Miss Sheldon had feared, the agent was plainly disturbed at the news of the nonarrival of madame's wearing apparel. He was a slim, pale-haired, kind-eyed man, who wore glasses, and carried his chin perpetually uptilted as if to keep them from sliding off his nose.

"There isn't a chance of our getting on track of it before night," he said, with mournful hopelessness, "and it's too bad—too bad—our opening concert, at that!" He reflected deeply for a moment. "We've got a dressmaker or two here in town. Couldn't one of 'em make you up something to wear on short notice?"

Back of Madame Sigel-Ganz hung a large picture very much on the slant. Madame's hat had worked still farther awry in the opposite direction, and she presented to the onlookers a picture of seaisick dejection.

"It is plain to see you are a bachelor, and don't know anything about women's clothes," she observed ungraciously. "It is not so easy to costume a prima donna as it is to mend your gloves or sew buttons on your pajamas."

The agent shrank visibly. He was not only a bachelor, as madame had conjectured, but a very bashful one.

"I—I didn't know but what they might have sample dresses, or something you could use in an emergency like this." He stammered painfully. "Of course, I—I really don't pretend to know anything about it."

"Sample dresses?" echoed the singer scornfully, sitting up straight, and shoving her hat back into a long-lost equilibrium. "You think any importer comes him here to live in a town so small like this Wellington? No, it is more impossible that than the other!"

"Then," said the agent, with a re-

signed sigh, blinking through blinded eyes as he nervously wiped his glasses, "I suppose you'll have to sing in street clothes at both concerts, and I'll be obliged to make a little apologetic speech before the curtain goes up."

"What?" cried madame, her temper increasing. "You think I will apologize that your railroad it runs off with my trunk? No! It is for the audience—the entire town—to apologize to me!" She arose, her hand on her heaving bosom.

The agent nodded meekly. His name was Smithers, and somehow it just seemed to suit him.

"If—I mean—since—you look at it that way, Madame Ganz, I suppose it would be better to omit the apology, and let the audience think what it likes."

"No!" again cried the irate song bird, now become entirely impatient and unreasonable. "No; the audience shall not think what it likes of Madame Sigel-Ganz!" She made a sort of defiant, flag-waving gesture above her startling hat. "I will sing at the *matinée*—yes; but at night I am *décolleté*, as it is proper, or"—she made a sweeping movement with a substantial right arm—"I am nothing at all!"

"But, dear madame, dear lady," protested Mr. Smithers, his face becoming a sort of greenish cream color—the color of his eyes, "really you must sing! It would not do to disappoint our townspeople. We have many Germans residing here, and I have advertised your appearance more than that of any one on the course."

Madame shrugged her shoulders in a manner calculated to indicate that further pleadings were in vain, and waddled majestically from the room.

"I'll interview the nearest dressmaker myself before the *matinée* begins," volunteered Miss Sheldon suddenly, to the agent's immense relief. "Perhaps—unlikely as it seems—we may in some way secure something for madame to wear before evening comes."

Miss Sheldon found that she rather liked poor Smithers, timorous, fusty, and inadequate to meet the situation as he seemed.



"How much—would the lady be willing to pay?"

It developed that Miss Mitchell, modiste, resided in the immediate neighborhood, and Miss Sheldon fortunately found her at home. She was a thin, colorless-looking little woman, with crisscross lines of discontent about her mouth, and with stiff eyebrows perpetually raised as if in a sort of fixed astonishment at the trying nature of the world she had found herself called upon to live in. When Miss Sheldon stated the predicament of Madame Sigel-Ganz, she looked absently at a scrap of lace in her hand, and remarked with a tired lack of interest that she was sorry, but could do nothing whatever to help matters.

"Oh, perhaps you can," urged the elocutionist persuasively. "I never take any one's first decision as final, Miss Mitchell, and I want you to think very

hard before you pronounce my errand hopeless. And I'm sure madame will make it worth your while."

There was a slight answering sign of interest in the dressmaker's manner.

"Is your singer thin or heavy-set?" she asked, after a pause, looking toward a heavy wardrobe across the room.

"She's half a head shorter than I am," came the prompt answer, "and must weigh fifty pounds more."

By this time the dressmaker was opening the wardrobe door, and Miss Sheldon stared in surprise as she lifted from its hanger and brought forward a cherry-colored satin gown richly trimmed with embroidery.

"Why, that looks really Paris made!" she exclaimed, wondering if Miss Mitchell were a sort of small-town genius in disguise.

"It is Paris made," answered the weak, complaining voice. "I'm just altering the sleeves a little. It was brought to me some time ago. It belongs to the lady who lives in

the big white house at the end of this street. She's a very rich widow—travels all over the world. The chances are she'll never put this on again after she gets it, with all the gowns she brings back from Paris and New York."

She shook the shining folds out in front of her, and bit a reflective lip.

"I wonder——"

"Can't I go right up there now and ask for the loan of it?" asked Miss Sheldon. "Of course, I know it seems presumptuous and all that, but I'd like to help Madame Ganz out if I can, and if I explain the situation she is in, and just how it happened——"

Miss Mitchell bunched the gown up in her arms, and retreated a step, giving an apprehensive glance about her, as if in fear of being overheard.

"Wait a minute, please. We mustn't

be too hasty about this." She lowered her voice. "Of course, it's a very handsome gown. How much—would the lady be willing to pay?"

"Oh, ten dollars at a pinch, I suppose, and something extra to you for your trouble, of course. But naturally the money would count for very little to a woman in the social position of the owner of this gown, and I should ask the loan of it as a favor entirely—a very gracious favor."

"Hm!" Miss Mitchell chewed thoughtfully at a paper of hooks and eyes, and almost choked on an eye that had become detached.

Again Miss Sheldon made the suggestion that she call on the lady in the big white house, and put the matter before her.

Miss Mitchell crossed over to the door, and turned with her hand on the knob.

"It would be much better for me to go myself. I'm certain she wouldn't do it for a stranger. But if you'll just sit down and wait till I get back, I'll see what she says about it."

Miss Sheldon consulted the bracelet watch her class of Harlem pupils had given her the previous Christmas.

"Thank you very much, Miss Mitchell. But may I ask you to return and let me know as soon as possible? I find that I have only half an hour now in which to swallow a little lunch and dress for the *matinée*."

The dressmaker was out of the house and back again in such an incredibly short space of time that Miss Sheldon felt sure her errand must have been immediately unsuccessful. Miss Mitchell's opening words reassured her:

"I didn't think she'd consent, but she did. You're mistaken, though, about her not being willing to take the money for it. She says she'll let her wear it for this one evening, but it will be ten dollars, and not a cent less. And, of course, my time is worth something—a couple of dollars, say—and that will make it as reasonable as any one ought to expect, it seems to me."

Miss Sheldon measured the width of

the bodice with her eye, and examined the length of the skirt.

"Well, I'm delighted! It will fit Madame Ganz beautifully, even if it is a little too long. We can loop it up in a sort of *peplum* effect—yes—I see exactly how it can be done. Please send it right round to the hall c. o. d., won't you?"

Miss Mitchell nodded, and began to fold up the gown.

The agent came behind the scenes at the close of the *matinée* concert so elated that he fairly walked on his toes.

"Capacity crowd, and it all went off with a bang!" he announced, with a triumphant little snap of his fingers. "If everything goes as well to-night—and it's bound to, with you ladies all looking like birds of paradise—they'll let me have full swing on the rest of the course to do just as I please. And some people who've come over from the next big town up the line—Abington—are intending to start a series of entertainments, and put me in charge of those."

He had already been informed of the capture of the cherry satin gown, which now flowed brightly from the back of a chair across the breadth of the white sheet Mrs. Cochran had spread out on the floor, and as he looked at it he smiled with such radiance that his very glasses seemed to glitter. Smiles are so natural when everything goes right!

Verdant Cochran was playing her opening solo on the violin at the evening concert, when her mother, standing in the wings to watch her with loving yet critical attention, became aware that beyond the figure of the child, staring across the stage from the other side, was a thin, anxious-faced woman whose eyebrows seemed unnaturally propped and held far up in the middle of her forehead. The dressing rooms were all on the side where Mrs. Cochran had posted herself, so she motioned to the stranger to wait where she was and she would cross to her.

"Who is it you wish to see?" she asked, in a whisper, as she emerged from the narrow, dark passageway be-

tween the back drop and the brick rear wall of the stage.

The newcomer peered anxiously across Mrs. Cochran's shoulder at the narrow streak of light opposite which marked the partial opening of a dressing-room door.

"Miss—I've forgotten her name, but the tall blond young lady in the blue tailor-made who called at my house early this afternoon. Please tell her that it's Miss Mitchell, the modiste, to see her, and that it is very important."

Mrs. Cochran sensed trouble of some kind immediately.

"Can't you wait until after Miss Sheldon recites?" she suggested cautiously. "She always likes to feel sort of happy when she goes before an audience with those funny pieces of hers that get everybody to laughing, and if your errand's anything that might maybe worry her a little—or is it, eh?"

The dressmaker pulled a tight coat tighter over her narrow chest, and nodded.

"I'm afraid it is. But, of course, I wouldn't worry her if I weren't obliged to. In this case I must. Won't you please ask her if she can't see me immediately? It's something that won't wait—it's got to be settled right straight off!"

"Tell me what it is," said Mrs. Cochran, interposing her motherly solid self between the passageway and the insistent caller. "Maybe I'll do just as well as Miss Sheldon. I ain't got so much on my mind as she has, seein' as I'm not on the program, but just came along, as I usually do, to look after my little girl. Tell me what's the matter, won't you?"

"Well," said Miss Mitchell, her voice thin-edged with determination, "the matter is that I've come after that cherry satin my customer was going to let Madame Ganz wear. She's changed her mind. She says she can't have it, after all, so there's nothing left for me to do but bundle it up and take it right back to her."

Once more she attempted to edge past Mrs. Cochran, but Mrs. Cochran again prevented this move on her part by

what seemed an involuntary shifting of her heavy weight from one foot to the other.

"Humph! It strikes me that the lady is pretty late in changin' her mind. Madame Ganz all rigged out in it and everything—strikes me as it's most too late."

Miss Mitchell's eyebrows shot up so alarmingly that they entirely disappeared in the fuzz of drab hair that edged her forehead.

"But it isn't too late! The concert has hardly begun, and I'm here in plenty of time to prevent its being worn. And I've brought back the money in two five-dollar bills and two ones—just as it was paid over." She fumbled agitatedly in her hand bag.

Mrs. Cochran began to suspect something. Why should the owner of the gown have made a fair-and-square bargain only to back out of it at the eleventh hour? It wasn't in reason. She quietly ignored the greenbacks the dressmaker was trying to thrust into her hands.

"Do you know what I think, Miss Mitchell?" she inquired, a shrewd forefinger uplifted. "I think your customer never consented to your renting out that dress at all. I think you were doin' it unbeknownst to her, intendin' to keep all the money for yourself, and you've suddenly got weak-kneed about it for fear she'll learn what you've done."

The modiste tried to assume an expression of injured innocence, but only succeeded in looking sheepish.

"The idea of any one's accusing me of such a thing!" she exclaimed weakly. "The very idea!"

"Then, if it ain't so—say so!" commanded Mrs. Cochran. "Goodness knows, I'm the last one to want to misjudge a fellow bein'! If it's a case of the woman gettin' cranky and changin' her mind, she's changed it at the wrong time of day, that's all. But if it's a case of your havin' done wrong and repentin' of it—"

"But I didn't look at it as being wrong," interrupted Miss Mitchell, with a whimper. "I don't think you ought to speak that way about it. But I did

just pretend to Miss Sheldon that I went up there and got her permission. I never stirred from my own front yard, for I thought the lady was out of town. I never would have dared to ask her if I'd had the chance, anyhow; but so long as I thought she'd never know the difference I didn't see any harm in a little deceit—business slow as it is just now. And when the Lord just seemed to be sending me that ten dollars direct——”

She paused with a snuffle.

“Some people blame everything on the Lord that comes to ‘em,” commented Mrs. Cochran severely, “includin’ potato bugs and an itchin’ palm. I don’t believe in it. When did you find out that the woman had got back?”

“Just before I started over here,” answered Miss Mitchell, beginning to tremble. “I learned then that she’d not only come home, but bought seats for the concert to-night. She’s sitting out there in the audience now—you can see her from here, near the end of that third row—the stout lady in spangles, and with the aigret in her hair.”

Mrs. Cochran looked, and nodded.

“Don’t seem to me as if she was needin’ those clothes at just this particular minute.”

“Oh,” cried Miss Mitchell distressfully, “but can’t you see—can’t you understand—that if Madame Ganz walks right out there in her face and eyes with her own gown on, and the bright lights and all, what a terrible thing it would be for me? She’ll be bound to know it at sight, and—why, she might



Another moment, and they were tightly clasped in each other's arms.

even go to law about it, and disgrace me—and me a member of the church in good standing and full fellowship!”

“Tain’t the good standin’ nor the full fellowship that helps or hurts us in the long run,” quoth Mrs. Cochran sagely. “It’s bein’ honest and straightforward, church or no church. I think you’ve got yourself into a pretty pickle, and the rest of us, too.”

Prolonged applause marked the close of Verdant’s encore number, and Mrs. Cochran nodded her tender approval to the little artist as she bowed herself off the stage on the dressing-room side. The next moment Miss Sheldon smilingly appeared behind the footlights, her pretty neck and shoulders rising like pearl above the folds of her bodice lace.

“Now,” announced Mrs. Cochran, “so long as Miss Sheldon has got started, I reckon we might as well cross back of

the stage, and you can settle it with Madame Ganz direct."

The prima donna had the dressing-room window wide open, and was taking deep-breathing exercises as they entered. Mrs. Cochran softly closed the door, and stood with her back against it.

"It's best not to get worked up or excited, anybody," she said warningly, "because the front rows might hear the talkin', and wonder what it was."

Madame Sigel-Ganz listened to the dressmaker's incoherent demands at first with bewilderment, then anger, then defiant scorn.

"If the lady is angry when she sees me in her costume—I do not blame her, for I, too, would be angry at a trick like that. But you—you—are responsible, and whatever she say to you—or whatever she do—it is to me not my affair, and I care not! But there is one thing I tell you—one thing I resolve: I will not give up the costume until they turn out the lights that the concert is over and people going home. I should say not, when it is that you come to ask it at the very last minute like this!" And she gave her train a muscular kick to emphasize her words.

"Last minute or not—you must take it off and give it to me!" demanded the dressmaker, with a courage born of her fear. "I do not permit you to wear it out on that stage."

"But I—I permit myself!"

Madame Ganz folded portly arms across a portly singer's chest. She looked as unbudgable as the Rock of Gibraltar.

Poor little Miss Mitchell covered in the face of that unbudgableness. She fluttered across the floor like a scared sparrow, and perched miserably on the edge of a chair.

Madame Ganz strode back to the window, and calmly recommenced her breathing exercises. Inhale—hold—count seven—a-a-a-a-h!

When Miss Sheldon returned to the dressing room the local accompanist followed close behind. He asked if Madame Ganz were ready to go on.

"Indeed, yes, I am ready," proclaimed

the prima donna, handing him her music with a flourish. She flashed her prominent, penciled eyes at the shrinking figure in the chair. "I am ready, and I am much angry, and it is when I am much angry I sing best of all."

She swept out before the audience to a burst of welcoming applause. Mrs. Cochran, Miss Sheldon, and Verdant followed to listen from the wings. But the visitor remained in the dressing room, refusing to enjoy or to admire. The world was very cruel to a woman who had made one little mistake in judgment, and of all the hard-hearted, unreasonable people, these concert artists were the worst.

There was an intermission after the singer's triumphant cherry-gowned appearance, and during it Mr. Smithers came rushing back to the dressing room.

"Great success! Fine—fine! Rented clothes and all!"

He stopped, noticing the presence of the dressmaker for the first time. Just as Mrs. Cochran started to explain in his private ear what had brought her there a voice came floating across the stage, semidark from the lowered curtain, which marked the temporary cessation of the program.

"Where is Madame Sigel-Ganz?" it cried imperiously. "I wish to speak with Madame Ganz!"

With a gasp, Miss Mitchell bounced from her seat. Frantically she hurled herself against the dressing-room door, and turned, facing the others.

"It is my customer!" she exclaimed, in a terrified whisper. "That's her voice. I can't let her see me—I'm afraid! Oh, Madame Ganz, you see, if you had only done as I asked! Now I am ruined—everything is ruined—and she will force you to take it off."

Madame's cheeks reddened to the warm hue of the bothersome gown she was wearing.

"If it is that I take it off, how do I appear for my lieder on the second part? In my lingerie? No! I paid the money for this that I wear, and"—she made a gesture so wide and sweeping that her plump fingers knocked the

glasses off the nose of the astonished Smithers—"the whole world cannot make me to undress!"

"Madame Sigel-Ganz! I demand to see her! I will see her!"

Unsuccessful in locating any dressing rooms the other side of the stage, the ominous-voiced lady was now within a few feet of the door.

The wearer of the cherry satin habiliments drew herself up as impressively as she had been accustomed to do when practicing the Wagnerian rôles she yet hoped to shine in when managers proved more kind.

"Do not be alarmed, my friends. She will I meet with boldness. And I will tell her face to face that I continue to wear ten dollars' worth of her gown until the last high note I sound."

Waving Miss Mitchell to one side, she threw open the door, and majestically sallied forth. The waiting woman, stout and glittering, stood revealed.

"Bertha!" she shrieked, on beholding Madame Ganz.

"Marguerite!" shrieked madame in reply. Another moment, and they were tightly clasped in each other's arms.

"Ah, Bertha," exclaimed the spangled one, wiping tearful eyes, her voice trembling with joy, "I had not yet looked at my program, and when you came out to sing—you can imagine it—my surprise, my happiness, after all these years! When I was in Berlin and asked about you—one said New York, another San Francisco. That was not much satisfaction, eh? But now, my dear old schoolmate, my Bertha, you are here!"

And again they clung in an emotional embrace.

"This gown—this very satin gown I sang in—" began Madame Ganz; but the other interrupted with vigor:

"It is very ugly—something like an old one of mine. I don't know what became of it; I gave it to a maid or some one, I suppose. But, ah, before you go away you shall have a costume worthy of you—a beautiful new one I have brought from Paris. I will give myself the pleasure of presenting it."

A drab-haired, shrinking little figure stole unobserved past the chattering women, making an unwitnessed and relieved escape from the stage door into the side street that led toward home.



Summer Passes

IT is not that the noons are yet
 Less parched than those of mid-July,
 Nor that the singing pines forget
 Their incense to the Delft-blue sky.
 The sunsets are as ruddy still,
 And when the glow has faded away,
 The velvet dark is yet a-thrill
 With diamond speck and lightning play.

But dawns a silver morning, rolled
 Cocoonlike in a silken veil,
 When, stealing from the milkweed's hold,
 The first wee airship waits a gale—
 When your kind eyes are almost wet,
 Despite crisp winds and fruit to come,
 For on that scarlet bough is set
 The sign of Summer's martyrdom!

JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.



Poor Peggy

By Elizabeth Newport Hepburn

Author of "The Medieval Male," "A Sacrifice to Diana," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HY. S. WATSON

AT the beginning of their romance everything was the most enticing rose color. They had known each other for years, yet at the time of their engagement Peggy was twenty and Don a bare twenty-five, and there was already an uncommonly snug little income from Don's business. He was in partnership with his cousin, Horace Laird, and the Laird Motor-cycle Company was further backed by Peter Gray, capitalist, the obliging bachelor kinsman of both the young partners.

Peggy, to be sure, had no money of her own. She lived at home with her parents and a younger brother and sister, both still at school. Her father, Morris Hale, was an extremely successful illustrator for the magazines; her mother, a petted, youthful, charming person, was obviously the wife of a competent man; and the family lived in a picturesque yet comfortably modern house in Lorard Park, in which desirable and restricted suburb nearly every other resident either painted pictures or wrote books or composed operas. The atmosphere of the place was artistic yet surprisingly prosperous; nobody was blatantly rich, but everybody was cultured and comfortable. Peggy Hale, at twenty, had never known an hour of care in her short life, never kept a monthly account, made a biscuit, or earned a dollar.

As her mother plaintively inquired of modern people who talked of college and a profession for girls: "Why should she, with a successful father and a prospective husband capable of shielding his wife from every ill?" Of course, she would have the normal duties of a well-bred married woman—the duties of supervising a pleasant home, with good maids, and all the improvements. For modernity in the shape of hard-wood floors, electric lights, and tiled bathrooms Mrs. Hale understood and considered imperative if one desired to be truly happy.

Donald Payne took an attractive little house near Riverside Drive for his bride. It was a good way uptown, and small as houses go, but it was a house. And, of course, apartments are banal, impersonal; one cannot have a real home in an apartment. At least, this was the viewpoint of Peggy's mother.

After the ceremony and the confetti and the necessary family indigestion, due to a surplus of wedding cake and marrons glacés, and the gay little honeymoon spent at some secret resort—neither Peggy nor Don have ever confided to their public the scene of that first radiant fortnight—the young folks came home, and settled down to the serious duties of life in their fourteen-foot front four-story upright box of a house, with its graystone façade and its

huge bronze knocker, for which trim elegance Donald paid nearly one-third of his annual income.

Peggy had a Japanese butler and a French cook, thanks to Mrs. Hale's initiative. Both these persons were marvelous economists, or so the employment agent had informed Mrs. Hale; and Peggy had not so much as to turn her hand in the matter of housework. The bride was a little vague as to just what that word "economy" might mean; but, then, as Don said when they ran over the first month's bills together, if they went back a bit the first year, it would not so much matter. The business was young, growing; next year ought to be better than this.

That winter and spring Peggy and Donald had a perfect time, and they flattered themselves that they lived a particularly quiet, cozy, domestic life. Peggy, who seemed to have a great deal of spare time on her hands, constantly met Don at his office, and they would walk uptown together for the sake of the exercise; they both missed the tennis playing and skating possible at Lorard Park. On the cook's night out they would get their little dinner at Maquin's, "so good, you know, and really cheap, as New York restaurants go!" And later they would listen to the opera, or see the Russian dancers, or go to a really good play—preferably a fine, melancholy tragedy, with wasted yesterdays, broken hearts, and the like, so that Peggy could cry happily in one of the balcony seats, surreptitiously holding Don's hand by way of substantial comfort.

And then when this idyllic existence was some six months old Donald was really late for dinner, and for the first time he failed to telephone Peggy.

In one of her prettiest negligees—for she had a slight headache, and had decided not to dress properly for the evening—Peggy waited for her lord, drumming on the piano and window-pane by turns, while Yoki fussed about the dining room and the pantry, and Marie, downstairs, with many Latin lamentations, endeavored to keep the good little dinner hot without overcooking it.

By twenty-five minutes of eight Peggy was on the telephone, trying vainly to get Donald's office, wondering



Neither Peggy nor Don have ever confided to their public the scene of that first radiant fortnight.



"Let's be glad ourselves, anyway—because other people are going to be so sorry for us!"

whether she ought not to call up the hospitals, and crying down all her satin and lace ruffles. And then, casually and quietly, the front door opened, and the master of the house entered, putting his latchkey into his pocket in his usual leisurely fashion. Peggy was down the hall and in his arms before she remembered that if Don had not so much as a broken leg or a singed coat from some dreadful subway accident, she, at least, had a grievance.

"I thought something horrible had happened!" she cried reproachfully. "You are over three-quarters of an hour late, and the mushrooms are ruined!"

Don was kissing her in rather an absent fashion; his eyes were a little dazed; otherwise he seemed his prosperous, well-groomed, contained self.

"I'm sorry, kid. But it couldn't be helped. And I'm here now."

"Couldn't you have telephoned?" asked Peggy.

"I forgot all about it," confessed her husband.

They were at table now, Yoki placing the hot soup before them. The square-based colonial candlesticks, the old-rose silken shades, the fragrant hothouse violets in their green bowl, the immaculate silver and linen—all these things made for a delicate and soothing charm.

But when Yoki had removed the first course, and was safe in the pantry, Peggy said, with cool dignity:

"Donald Payne, do you mean to tell me you have no real excuse for keeping dinner waiting all this time—and for frightening me half to death?"

"We-ell, yes, perhaps you'd call it a pretty fair excuse," he said slowly. "We have been holding a consultation in the office—Harold, our bookkeeper, Cousin Peter, and I. And that is why I forgot to telephone until I was on the subway, at five minutes

past seven."

Peggy waited, her small head held very high, her cheeks unusually pink. Suddenly Donald laid down his fork, and looked his wife in the eye. He was a little pale; his square chin was set.

"After all, there's no good time for bad news," he said. "Peggy, the Laird Motor-cycle Company has gone to smash, and in exactly two weeks' time your young man will be out of a job!"

Peggy gazed at him with round, incredulous blue eyes.

"I thought the company was flourishing?" she said.

"I told you last month that things were dull—that Cousin Peter was preaching economy," he said. "But, of course, Harold and I have felt that it was but a temporary slump, liable to come in any business, and we felt sure

of having Cousin Peter at our back for the next two years, as he originally promised. But the old gentleman has turned turtle. He says that we've been managing things extravagantly, that our salaries are too high—he himself fixed them in the beginning—and that he has lost money in a copper slump, and cannot afford to lose any more. What may possibly be still more to the point is this: They are saying downtown that Cousin Peter, at sixty-five, is about to be married."

"But that means that you and Harold won't have anything at all when your salaries stop!" said Peggy, aghast.

"Exactly, my dear—except that, as Harold's wife has an income of her own, they can afford to wait until something else turns up. But you and I are up against it, little girl."

He waved his hand toward the pretty room, the candleglow, the soft rustle of Yoki in the pantry.

"It means that all this must go by the board. We'll have to subrent the house at once."

"Subrent?" said Peggy. "Why, Donald, of course you'll get another position as soon as you try, and it will be cheaper in the end to stay here than to move. Mother has always said that moving is frightfully expensive."

Don smiled, a little grimly. His boyish face had a touch of wistfulness as he stared at his wife's charming head, her young bare throat, her sweeping gown of lace and satin, which outlined so delicately her slender, almost fragile, figure.

Upstairs in their little study half an hour later he took her in his arms.

"Peggy, I didn't want to tell you any more with the servants around; but I'm afraid you don't understand. This is a serious matter. I'm only twenty-five; I've had but one position before Harold and Cousin Peter and I started together, and the chances are that it will be ten years before I shall earn anything like the salary I have been drawing. Even if things go pretty well, I shall be damned lucky if by the end of this year I'm not deep in debt."

Peggy looked suddenly absurdly

young; her color faded, and tears came into her eyes.

"Oh, Don," she said, "it is dreadful! All to-day I have been so proud, so happy—and now I feel frightened, almost ashamed."

Don looked at her uncomprehendingly. He had been an optimistic ass, of course, but why should Peggy talk of feeling ashamed?

As he held her, the color surged back into her face.

"Don," she said, in a low voice, "you know we thought that maybe, that perhaps—well, it's so! And, oh, dearest, let's be glad ourselves, anyway—because other people are going to be so sorry for us!"

The next half year seemed to Donald Payne an unforgettable, amazing, grimly tragic period of his youth.

When a man possesses that valuable asset known as a "job," nothing else in life seems so simple, so easy to attain, so obviously the natural thing. But the man for any reason ousted from a well-worn groove sees life with different eyes. Despite his youth, his health, his good training, and his many friends, Donald Payne found now that there seemed just one stumblingblock in the way of his finding new work. He needed it too much; this seemed the short of it. Work which would have been possible to an unmarried youngster he felt obliged to refuse, and in the beginning his determination was firm to stay and fight it out in New York. Peggy had gone home to her mother upon the subrenting of the house, and Donald went with her, going into the city every morning from Lorard Park. Mrs. Hale felt that her daughter must now be surrounded by every care; yet in her old home, under these new conditions, Peggy grew a little difficult and irritable, and on the whole she was not looking as fit as the family doctor would have liked to see her.

At first it occurred to nobody—least of all to Peggy and Donald themselves—that they could be separated.

But as weeks went by, and the young man failed to get work in his own city



H.S. WATSON.

The men looked at each other hopelessly.

and along the lines of his special training, his face grew thin and peaked. He found odd jobs here and there, but the good, permanent position which would insure him and Peggy a living seemed utterly mythical. He began to wonder whether he would ever attain such a position again; and meanwhile the weeks and months drifted by. Sometimes Donald asked himself whether a son could grow up to respect a father who had been "out of employment" at the time of his own birth. And sometimes he wondered whether Peggy herself understood how hard he was working for his chance—how haunted and dreary a man felt who was not even earning his own living.

Then one evening he came home fagged and worn, yet triumphant. For

he had found work which promised to be permanent, which was based on a solid foundation—work which meant a small present income, but a possible future. He was to have the superintendency of a flourishing motor-cycle company, which also manufactured a small and inexpensive automobile on the side—but in a remote Pennsylvania town seven hours from New York.

"You haven't accepted it?" said Peggy's mother, with a gasp.

Peggy's father was looking at his son-in-law with frank sympathy. A magazine illustrator has few things in common with engineering and manufacturing, but the older man had shown before now that he appreciated Donald's position as his wife seemed incapable of doing. Mrs. Hale almost always gave

Donald a sense of his being subtly in the wrong, as though he had married Peggy under false pretenses; but there were moments when the young husband had known the comfort of the elder man's friendly and pithy speech.

He spoke now to his wife:

"Why shouldn't Don accept any promising offer? You cannot expect to keep Peggy permanently tied to your apron strings."

"I did accept," said Don quietly. "There was not time to consult you or Peggy; they needed a man at once, their manager having died suddenly of heart failure. It was a case of taking or leaving. So I start for Shawville tomorrow, and once on the ground I can find how to make Peggy comfortable. It is a fair-sized town, and I can take a little house and get things in running order by the time she is ready to come."

"Peggy's coming will be indefinitely delayed, I fear," said Mrs. Hale. "Why, Don, it's absurd to consider her going to an utterly unknown place with a little young baby."

At this point Peggy herself came into the conversation.

"Don, I do think you ought to have consulted me first," she said irritably. "You might have gotten a good place near home to-morrow—if you had only waited."

Don looked at her with a spark of anger in his eyes.

"I've been out of work for nearly seven months," he said. "I've borrowed from your family and mine to the tune of eleven hundred dollars. It would have been suicidal for me to have turned down this offer."

His father-in-law nodded.

"You are right, my boy, and if Peggy doesn't see it, then it is probably my fault—because I have not taught her to face the facts of life when they don't rhyme with her wishes. There are disadvantages about the sheltered life for women, as even we old fogey men are beginning to realize."

"The sheltered life!" said Mrs. Hale, with eyes that sparkled like a disordered electric wire. "The sheltered life for

women who bring men's children into the world! My poor, darling Peggy!"

The men looked at each other hopelessly. There seemed nothing to say; they stood arraigned before the highest tribunal. The two women went out of the room. Peggy was crying.

Three weeks later Donald was called back to Lorard Park to welcome his small son into the world. For some hours Peggy's life was in danger, and it looked as though Don's problem of how to support a family might be speedily and tragically solved.

But modern skill justified itself finally, and from the first Donald, junior, was a healthy, hungry, vigorous atom, indifferent to all problems save that of procuring plentiful nourishment. Peggy, wan and white, but smiling a triumphant mother smile which made her look like a Madonna and a little girl in one, kissed Don good-by at the end of the week without undue lamentations. She loved her husband, but she had now a son to consider, and she agreed with the baby's grandmother that it must be some time before that precious person braved the dangers of an uncivilized factory town far from metropolitan doctors.

So Donald returned alone to his boarding house in the curious provincial Pennsylvania Dutch town, where the girls who waited on him at table spoke a queer jargon which at first he could hardly understand, with upward inflexions and extraordinary omissions of words usually regarded as effective or essential. He worked in the factory, in his office, supervising the hands, watching the condition of the machinery, or examining the finished product, full twelve hours a day.

Often at night there was extra work also—the considering of estimates and planning economies necessary if he hoped to gain the upper hand of the situation, that expert knowledge of inner workings which spells ultimate success. For all this labor he drew at first the munificent salary of fourteen hundred dollars a year.

Of this he sent fifty dollars a month

for Peggy and the boy, set aside twenty-five toward the paying of his debts, and on the rest managed to live frugally, his one extravagance being a beautifully colored meerschauum filled many times daily. By contrast with this driving existence, his past life seemed idle, even unprofitable, measured by standards other than those of mere money.

But work kept him sane and sweet-natured—work and Peggy's letters. Yet the boy was two years old—a strapping, red-cheeked, imperious person, and the young father's flying trips home had been, perforce, at long intervals—before Peggy wrote that she wanted to come and pay him a visit. She would leave the boy with his grandparents, and come for a week with Don.

That first evening in the bare, colorless room of the little hotel was a memorable experience for both husband and wife. They were shy, tongue-tied, afraid of the old vivid emotions of the past—and afraid, too, of a new relation which must mean readjustment. But after the first embarrassment they talked far into the night.

"Dad sent me," said Peggy honestly. "He said if I cared tuppence for you that I was quite strong enough to prove it, and mother got angry. The more they wrangled the more I realized that dad was right—that we needed each other—that I've been just a plain shirk."

"Peggy," said Don, "I want you to *want* to come, and not just from a sense of duty. But, oh, if I could just be enough to you to make you happy, even off here—"

"Do you suppose," said Peggy practically, "that if we took a flat it would have a decent bathroom?"

She had just spent twenty minutes vainly scrubbing the grimy, corroded hotel tub. And that question began the fascinating, depressing, imagination-haunting business of home hunting in a community where exterior and interior decoration all deserved the damning adjective "gingerbread," making that tall narrow house near Riverside seem, by force of contrast, a veritable palace of beauty.

They found at last an apartment in

a two-family house which rented for nineteen dollars a month. This abode consisted of a "parlor" nine by eleven, papered in yellow chrysanthemums, flamboyant, but fresh and clean; a dining room "finished" in an incendiary red, two infinitesimal bedrooms, a kitchen, and a small bathroom, with a large new tin tub, two closets, and a back porch.

It was the porch which won Peggy. The flat was the upper half of the little house, the front windows looking out on a quiet, commonplace street with very young trees just struggling into bud, but from the porch at the back one glimpsed an old orchard with twisted limbs, a mass of apple blooms, and between these plump, arboreal dowagers a vista of purple hills far beyond the ugly factory town.

"We can sleep here in summer, and Boy can have his nap outdoors every day, as he does now," said Peggy. "The wall papers would give dad nightmare, but they needn't last forever, and I don't see why the place shouldn't be very live-in-able when it's clean and our things are in place."

Don looked at her, his eyes very dark and bright.

"But there's no room for a maid," he said, at last. "You may as well know, Peggy, that servants here are nearly as expensive as they are in New York, and a great deal scarcer."

"Oh, we'll find one somehow," said Peggy, with the optimism of blissful ignorance—an optimism which frightened Don a little. But she was looking at him shyly while the lovely color deepened in her cheek.

"Don, you'll have to be patient at first, but I'll try. I've learned a good deal about sewing this last year, and I can take care of the boy. But I'm still ignorant of most things I ought to know."

"As a poor man's wife," said Don huskily. "Oh, but I was a cheerful idiot, marrying as I did, thinking myself secure and rooted—and bringing you all the time to this!"

But she laid her hand on his lips.

"That's the way mother talks—and at



H. S. WATSON

"This is the lady," declared Peggy, "and Don will assure you the best cook to be had in the vicinity."

first I thought she was right, until I got tired of being treated like an early Christian martyr. Then I began to wonder why a man should have all the burden. I began to see some things I'd never noticed before." She hesitated a moment. "Poor, dear dad!" said Peggy gently.

There was a note in her voice that Don had never heard before.

Nearly a year after this, Mrs. Hale paid her first visit to her daughter. As she said to Mr. Hale:

"Poor Peggy writes cheerfully, but she tells me nothing at all. I'm worried about her and the boy—the chances are that the kind of service they get out there in the wilds may mean anything from chronic indigestion to ptomaine poisoning."

5

At the station her grandson, there with his father to meet her, greeted his relative with an engaging smile. He was bigger and even pinker than when she had last seen him. His rendition of her name was ingratiating, since he called her "gammaboofy," pronounced as one word. At the sight of him, she felt relieved of her worst misgivings.

At the psychological moment, when Don brought her mother home, Peggy was in the kitchen browning a roast.

"Where on earth is your cook?" said Mrs. Hale between kisses.

"This is the lady," declared Peggy, arms akimbo, "and Don will assure you the best cook to be had in the vicinity."

As she spoke, she unbuttoned her apron, showing a little cotton frock which matched her cheeks.

"Why, Peggy," said Mrs. Hale, "that is one of the work dresses you asked me to buy for your maid!"

"Didn't I tell you she was about my size?" said Peggy. "Did you ever see a better fit?"

Mrs. Hale turned accusingly to her son-in-law.

"I thought you had a salary increase—that you could afford a decent servant?" she said.

"I have had," said Don calmly, "and paid off the last dollar I owed. We are now buying stock in the company—at Peggy's suggestion."

Peggy was swinging her son into his high chair, and then tying a serviceable bib under his diminutive but determined chin.

It was rather a pathetic little harangue from Mrs. Hale which the girl finally interrupted.

"But, mother, dear," she said, "I'm happy as a clam—haven't had a back-ache in months—regular housework seems to exercise more muscles than tennis! And you can see that I'm not poisoning Don or Donnie."

This was at dessert, when the four had partaken of an excellent dinner.

Mrs. Hale was no longer indignant, but there was a suspicious chokiness in her next words.

"My poor, plucky little girl!" she said.

Don tried to conceal the smile that curled his mouth corners, but his wife laughed outright, left her chair impetuously, and kissed her mother's wet cheek.

"Never mind, darling! At my age

your granddaughter will have had such a perfectly scrumptious education that *she* won't be able to afford the luxury of making her own biscuits and blouses."

"My *what!*" said Mrs. Hale, in alarm.

"Yes," said Peggy cheerfully; "she's already promised from Ante Land—it was for her college education that we bought the stock."

Mrs. Hale looked about the cramped room, at the abominable woodwork, and then at her daughter, glowing with vitality, with a new look of power. Even her son-in-law seemed a bigger, more distinctive person than she remembered him. Her pretty face sagged a little in lines of utter bewilderment.

Peggy said very gently, but with a lilt in her voice:

"I know we're queer, darling, but just stop pitying us, there's an angel, and I will try not to sympathize with *you!*"

"In Heaven's name, for what?"

"For being so dependent on your cook," said Peggy, with a flash of laughter. "And because, poor, dear mummy, you have never had the joy of earning your own living, like dad and Don, and even me—for I do earn mine now, don't I, Donald?"

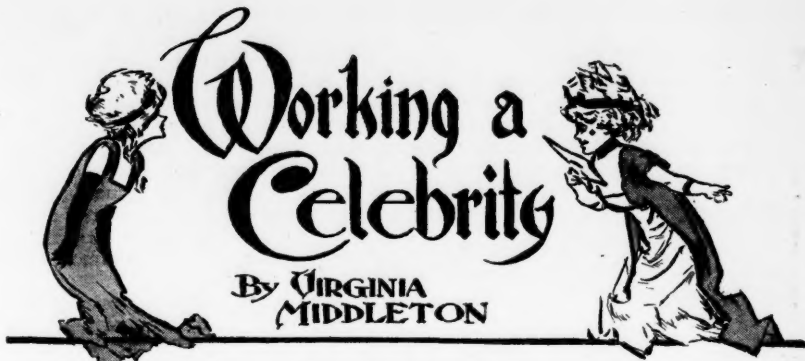
Donald leaned forward to pat his mother-in-law's pretty, ineffectual little hand; but he looked across at his wife, in her trim housemaid's frock. There was pride in his voice, and something deeper than pride in the eyes that met Peggy's eyes—a long, level, happy look.

"You earn your living, and a great deal besides, little braggart," he said.



Working a Celebrity

By VIRGINIA MIDDLETON



ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

THE problems of food and raiment being decently—even elegantly—disposed of in the case of Robert and Laura, the chief difficulty which they faced was that of society. After the habit of man, Robert did not perceive it. He had his work, and his ambitions. He had the incentive to labor which a young man feels whose success in a small sphere has been sufficiently pronounced to induce the personages of his profession to summon him to a large one. It had been his conduct of a city official bribe investigation in his native city of Hillspport that had caused the lawyers for the defense, imported from New York, to invite young Mr. Greening to remove himself to that field of greater opportunity. It was his wife who persuaded him to accept the invitation. Naturally, he had not much spare time in which to reflect what he and Laura should do for society.

With Laura it was otherwise. In Hillspport she had been a busy and a prominent person. Greatness never visited the town without having Laura invited to meet it; if Laura gave a luncheon, or a dinner, or a tea for a guest of some other hostess, the other hostess felt that the utmost had been done in hospitable compliment. What Laura gave for bridge prizes was carefully noted by other bridge givers; when the size of Laura's finger bowls changed there was a gradual change in the size of all the

"best" finger bowls in Hillspport. Altogether, Laura was a leader at home, and she had no intention of sinking into the position of a nobody in New York. Nevertheless, it appalled her to calculate how much less was the purchasing power of eight thousand a year in the metropolis than five thousand at home.

The wives of her husband's new associates called upon her, invited her to dinner, gave teas for her. She promptly decided that she did not wish her circle to be bounded by the same circumference as theirs. With an instinct for social values she immediately desisted that all these good ladies were merely *in* New York; they were not of it, despite their husbands' excellent professional standing. They were a little group of floating atoms, coalesced by the chemical attraction of loneliness. They did not "belong." Laura meant to "belong." She told herself with a high and heated Americanism that mere money did not matter; it was brains, charm, social fitness that counted. And surely she and Robert possessed those qualities to an unusual degree!

But how to let the real New Yorkers, the ones who "belonged," know it? She could scarcely send out circulars listing her qualifications for intimacy in the most select circles of the city! The end of the first season in New York, therefore, saw Laura with a little line etched between her eyebrows. The problem

had been too much for her immediate solution.

But she spent the summer in Hillsport, and the additional weight that attached to her words, her clothes, her manners there, on account of the one winter in New York, removed the wrinkle from her forehead, and fired her

members sent her cards. Not one, however, paid any attention to the cards which she sent in return. The only distinct effect of that move was to flood her mail with appeals for aid—financial preferred—from every other charity in Greater New York. At the end of that season the lines upon her brow were two, and only Robert's joyous announcement that he was obliged to go to England on business that summer eradicated them.

On the boat coming back was Laura's opportunity—the key, by which she saw herself, in a flash of inspiration, opening the door of society—of congenial, real, "belonging" society. For, of course, Laura always told herself that there was nothing merely snobbish in her dissatisfaction with the people whom she had met since she came to live in New York.

The key was Sir Bertram Billington, knighted at the last coronation for his distinguished services to the drama. Sir Bertram was an actor of an international reputation for his acting and his modesty. And Sir Bertram and Lady Billington happened to take kindly to the Greenings.

"Everybody will be wild to meet him," Laura calculated to herself. "He's such a fine actor, and now he's a knight, and everybody knows how dignified, and reserved, and difficult he is. But they really like us."

And her prophetic eye strayed downward to a line of carriages and motors outside

with fresh zeal, and determination. Surely it was impossible that a person so justly admired as she was at home should remain practically unnoticed in New York.

The second winter was only infinitesimally better than the first. She allied herself with a certain charity, and was put upon a committee. Three of its

her Riverside Drive apartment—vehicles of the great who were anxious to meet the foreign celebrity—and she strong-mindedly put down the twinge of conscience that accused her of unfairness to the people who "really liked" her.

Now, in order to play the game of social angling, even with the bait of a



On the boat coming back was Laura's opportunity.

perfectly workable celebrity, it is necessary for the feminine fisher to possess native charm as well as talent. Celebrities are often shy; more often they are wary. The woman who purposes to fish with them must have the art to disguise her intentions.

Laura fortunately possessed this art. The Billingtons thought her charming—pretty, well bred, well dressed, with a flattering little air of deference, with a pleasant humor in conversation, with the right degree of personal reserve. And being themselves a pair of sentimental lovers after some thirty years of vicissitudinous married life, they liked the fact that Laura and Robert seemed so frankly in love with each other.

"Of course, people in our wandering profession don't make friends," sighed her ladyship to her husband. "But those young Greenings are very attractive. If we stay long in New York it will be a pleasure to see something of them."

Which was quite what Laura wished her ladyship to say.

Arrived in New York, the social aspirant put her wits to work. It was all very well to have annexed the Billingtons, but as long as society was run on the loose and careless methods of today she could not make any public announcement of the fact that would be at all helpful to her plans. She couldn't have the billboards and the empty barrels posted with pictures and proclamations after the brutally simple and direct method of Sir Bertram's theatrical manager; she could not send out cards, inviting society to come and inspect her new importation of fresh, unspoiled celebrities, as though she were a milliner and the Billingtons were hats. No, the way of the social climber was needlessly hard. Some genius ought to reorganize it all and put it on a business basis.

Then she bethought herself of her committee. She remembered the three ladies who had sent her cards for their musical afternoons or their unadorned "at homes." She remembered that she had accepted the invitation contained on every one of those cards, and that not one of the hostesses had responded to her own slip of pasteboard.

"Ah, well! New York is not Hillsport," soliloquized Laura, comforting herself. "No one in New York calls!"

And she took her pen in hand and wrote to the chairman of her committee that while she was in England in July she had visited all the charities of a nature similar to the one in which the committee was interested, and that she brought back information and ideas which she longed to place at the chairman's disposal. And the chairman, being providentially unoccupied when Mrs. Greening's note came, called her up on the telephone, and asked her to tea at the very newest hotel tea room of the era.

Laura was half elated, half depressed. It would, of course, be a pleasure to be seen in the company of Mrs. De Peyster Snubbington-Jones in the newest hotel's tea room—*Town Tattle* might even make a paragraph about it—but was it such an honor as an invitation to tea with the lady in her own home would have been? Ah, well! She couldn't waste time in splitting straws. So she went to the tea room, and there she told Mrs. De Peyster Snubbington-Jones certain things about the English charity which that astute lady perceived she could turn to her own advantage. She also perceived that Laura might be useful.

And by and by Laura managed to introduce the name of Sir Bertram Billington. She was proud of the ease and unconcern with which she did it. It was so casual that she was not at all sure that Mrs. De Peyster Snubbington-Jones would hear it; she wondered if she ought not to have said it louder. But a second showed her that she had been sufficiently emphatic.

"You know him?" asked Mrs. Snubbington-Jones, almost as casually as Laura.

Laura admitted knowing him "pretty well." She was so far from boastful, so almost indifferent to the distinction of the acquaintance, so prettily and honestly admiring of the talent and the personality of the actor, that she was quite convincing, even to the trained ear of Mrs. Snubbington-Jones.

"I thought he was an awful recluse, and all that sort of thing," said the lady.

"I believe they don't go about very much," stated Laura innocently. "But he seemed to take a fancy to Robert, and they come sometimes to us."

Mrs. Snubbington-Jones' mind leaped forward to the midwinter entertainment which her charity would be called upon by the present cumbrous system of fund raising to give; she might induce Bertram Billington, if she only knew him, to speak, to recite, to act—do something for nothing on that occasion.

"I should like to meet him," she announced in her downright style.

And Laura, palpitant with the excitement of the encounter, flushed with victory, said gently that she thought there would be no difficulty in arranging that. And thus she entered upon the favorite path of the social climber of modest fortune—she began her career as an exploiter of celebrities.

In order to have celebrities to exploit one must meet them. They do not range the street waiting for the social climbers to grab them by the hand and carry them off, willy-nilly, to be teaed, and dined, and wined, and generally fêted. They must be discovered in their lairs.

To Laura, that winter, the Bertram Billingtons were a veritable godsend. Having once taken her into the circle of their friendly acquaintance, they did not apply to her every invitation, her every visit, the test for her motive. The actor was really interested in his work and rather blind to things beyond it; his wife was gently interested in youth, in flower gardens, in the kindly, gracious things of the world, and she was invariably blind to unworthy motives.

That he and she sometimes refused Laura's invitations was not due to their suspicious natures, but to their inability to accept them, to their simple desire to stay at home and talk to each other. And that she paid court, laid siege, to certain of their friends whom she met in their hotel—to this promising playwright and that renowned singer—did not arouse their suspicions of her single-heartedness; they only admired her taste

and her hospitable spirit. "So open—so American!" they said.

So that they proved from her point of view a perfect bonanza to her in her opening campaign for a social position in New York other than that of the tens of thousands of strangers who have the money to live and dress fairly well, but who are without the first possibility of "belonging."

"It must be terribly hard work!" commented the onlookers at Laura's game after a year or two. "Heavens! Breaking stones would be easier. She's a clever woman—why doesn't she do something worth while herself, so that she would be chased for her own achievements rather than for the celebrities she can muster?"

The idea had occurred to Laura herself. She could play the violin very well—in Hillsport they thought her quite a marvel. She had sometimes flirted with the tempting thought that with diligent practice, with study, with zeal, she might become such a violinist that the various Mesdames De Peyster Snubbington-Joneses of her acquaintance would be proud to know her for herself, would be boastful about having her on their visiting lists.

But she rejected the notion finally; in the first place, she was pretty sure that professional women rarely attained on their own account the sort of social position for which she strove; and, in the second place, she unconsciously realized that the profession of a social climber is an exacting one, and that it entirely refuses to be made secondary to any other. No, it was easier not to complicate the situation by two sets of ambitions.

Some of her critics, among them even Robert, said that it was a very expensive business—that of playing the social game with celebrities as cards. Laura herself had noticed the small purchasing power of eight thousand a year when she first came to New York; it seemed less and less elastic each year thereafter. One was obliged to dress, so she thought, to match the company one kept; and Mrs. De Peyster Snubbington-Jones wore afternoon gowns costing three

hundred dollars apiece, and had furs that would make a quarter of Robert's yearly income seem small.

And celebrities were accustomed, some of them, to the most costly means of transportation; one could not ask a lonely prima donna to dinner and fail to send a motor car for her—or if one could, one was likely to lose the prima donna from the feast, as Laura one night discovered to her mortification. One could not take the Norwegian actress whom every one was "crazy to meet," and whom one had annexed with deliberation and forethought, to a luncheon at the second-best woman's club in town; one must take her to the most fashionable club; that meant becoming a member there at a fabulous sum for initiation fee, and another fabulous sum for yearly dues, and third, and fourth, and fifth fabulous sums every time one decided to eat or drink therein.

And all this expense took no count of the expense to one's pride and one's native, Hillsport independence, in getting one's self nominated for membership and the nomination acted upon in advance of the other twelve hundred names on the waiting list. But all these expenses were unflinchingly borne by the heroic woman who had quite determined to "belong" in New York as she had "belonged" in Hillsport.

Clothes, and vehicles, and food; theaters, and operas, and gifts—for Laura learned that many celebrities had a ravenous appetite for little presents, and did not intend in the least to be exploited for nothing!—how large a hole these expenses seem to make in that once magnificent salary of Robert's! And when his salary was raised, and he firmly stated that the increase was to be put aside to create a fund to buy his way into a partnership, she could have



The wives of her husband's new associates called upon her.

wept and called out upon his heartlessness. When she had been economizing so dreadfully! When she needed every cent to keep things going decently! When flowers were so high, and taxis so ruinous, and the European steamship lines had united to keep the transatlantic fares up to a frightful figure! When stage-dancing lessons and French were so horribly dear!

Why was she obliged to take stage-dancing lessons and French lessons? Because everybody was doing it this season. And because Mrs. De Peyster Snubington-Jones had two protégés for whom she simply commanded pupils. That was the adequate reason. To "belong" in New York—especially to belong by such insecure tenure as by celebrity-showing, lion-taming—zoo-keeping, Robert called it sometimes—was certainly not a cheap pleasure.



She told Mrs. De Peyster Snubbington-Jones certain things about the English charity.

Laura, weaving her little web from the good old Bertram Billingtons as a center, had dealt largely in a theatrical brand of celebrity. Actors, actresses, singers (male and female), violinists, dramatists—all those who have to do with things across the footlights—for such were her first nets spread. In a way, she realized that they were the cheapest of celebrities; that is, they were the most easily attainable, the least rare, the least difficult—with certain notable exceptions. And there was, besides, the most competition for them; why, she reflected almost indignantly, there was scarcely a theatrical critic's wife who was not engaged in building up a social circle for herself on the foundation of the actors and actresses she knew.

But, on the other hand, Laura admitted to herself that theatrical celebrities were the ones whom most women wanted to meet. She doubted, contemptuously, whether Mrs. De Peyster

Snubbington-Jones had ever heard of John Fiske, for example; but she had heard of Booth. Greatness in less spectacular, less widely advertised lines, was mere obscurity to the average fashionable, feminine mind, and it was really scarce worth one's while to cultivate it.

And then, after a summer in Germany, in which she had worked like a day laborer achieving acquaintance with a new singer who was to appear in next winter's opera, and with a new exponent of the plays of Ibsen, she came home to find that the passion of the season was not to be actors and musicians at all, but socialists. There was a Russian socialist, traveling with a lady whom unkind rumor declared to be not his wife, whom Mrs. De Peyster Snubbington-Jones was mad to meet, and to entertain. Mrs. De Peyster Snubbington-Jones had gone in for political and economic theories.

"Life is so much more interesting than art, don't you think?" she said sweetly to Laura, declining to come to Laura's to meet the new singer on the ground that she was going somewhere else to meet the socialist.

And Laura, with quite an impersonal, detached air, made a little speech about the relation of art to life, and tried to act as though she did not hear her knell ringing in Mrs. Snubbington-Jones' dulcet words. And when next she encountered that great lady, and that great lady asked her eagerly if she had yet met the socialist-Christian blacksmith who was preaching in the parish house of one of the fashionable churches on Saturday nights, she knew that she was about to become a back number in the exploitation of celebrities.

And, in addition to that blow, she had another. Her new actor, the one who interpreted the plays of Ibsen in Russian so that they were just a shade more

incomprehensible to his American audience than they had always been in English, showed an unbecoming eagerness to manage his own social career. He declined to wear Laura's ribbon on his neck; he had a keen sense of social values of his own, and he very successfully exploited himself—or, at any rate, as successfully as could be done in a year when socialism and political economy were the passion of fashionable society.

Now, the difference between the Laura, the heroine of this simple narrative, and many another social climber was that Laura really possessed, safely stored beneath her shining, graceful braids and puffs, a brain of considerable cogency. The unexpected decline in the value of theatrical securities, and the unexpected briskness in dealings in political philosophy gave her more leisure than usual to use that brain. At first she did not appreciate the blessing. But early in December, in comparing last year's November bills with this year's, according to her thrifty Hillsport habit, she made a pleasing discovery.

"Robert!" she cried. "A most wonderful thing—our livery bill this month is less than half what it was this time last year—twenty-eight dollars to sixty-three! Isn't that splendid?"

Robert agreed that it was splendid.

"Why, everything's less," went on Laura, going through the sheaves of bills. "Isn't it strange? I didn't realize that the cost of living had gone down any. But—it must have. Van Borda's and Scot's bill is half—exactly. So is the meat bill. Bauer and Blum's is twelve this year to thirty last—"

"Who are they?" asked Robert uninterestedly.

"The florists. Even the gas bill is a lot less."

"We've done a good deal less entertaining," remarked Robert cheerfully.

"That is so," agreed Laura lugubriously.

"I feel better for it. I tell you a man can't whoop it up until one or two o'clock every night and be fresh for a court appearance at ten the next day.

We haven't been really dull, you know, this last month."

"No—not exactly," agreed Laura thoughtfully.

"Keep it up, Laura, and I'll wager you'll need less rouge in next February than you needed last!"

Laura blushed. She had not known that Robert had guessed the source of her color at the fag end of the preceding season.

It is, however, only in revival meetings that sinners forswear their past lives in one sentence, turn their backs forever upon folly and temptation, and walk henceforth in sanity and sobriety of purpose. Laura did not then and there forswear the baiting of social big fish with celebrities; she did not then and there resolve never again to exploit a prominent person, never again to run after a brilliant figure for her own ends.

But the lesson of the bills was not lost upon her. Nor was the lesson of the blacksmith-socialist. If the lady who could invite other ladies to meet him was this season's *persona grata*, what might be required of one next season?

In three or four more years she learned a good deal. One year the darling of the hour had been the fortunate young woman—a new aspirant for social dignities—who claimed the barefoot dancer as a dearest friend. The next it was the woman at whose house the leader of the Belgian suffragettes sojourned, after their notorious attack upon the lace works in Antwerp; yet another it was a socialist mayor of Caxterbury, or some other city where one would not normally expect socialists to be in power.

"I'm getting old," said Laura to herself after the last season of her education had passed. "I'll soon be thirty-five. I'm no longer agile enough to exploit the celebrity. One has to be a sort of social jumping jack to do it. One never knows, unless one is gifted with the gift of prophecy, what sort of a celebrity the dear Mesdames Snubbington-Jones will require next year. And another drawback is the uncertainty, not only of the dear Snubbing-

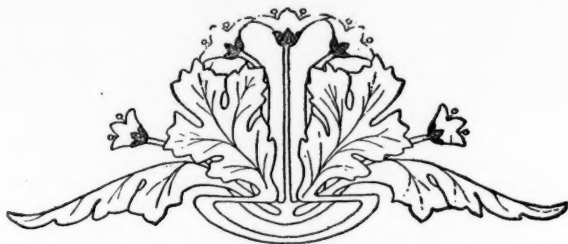
Joneses' progressive dates, but of the celebrities themselves. Some of them—good ones, too, perhaps the very best—are interested in their jobs; that is almost fatal to their exploiter's interests. If a singer is liable at any time to stay at home from your party because a cold fog has come up to threaten his voice for next day, what use is he to you in your career as an exploiter? On the other hand, if he loses his voice he is even less useful.

What good to you is the artist who forgets to come to luncheon because he has been so absorbed in his painting that he didn't notice twelve and one o'clock? What use to you is the socialist candidate who actually prefers to address an East Side meeting in a stuffy, smelly hall to coming to your dinner. The tend-

ency of a real good celebrity to stick to the work that makes him celebrated is almost fatal to his social exploiter.

"No, what with the lightning-change effects of which the tastes of fashionable ladies are capable, and the bare-faced habit of some celebrities to run their own campaign for their own benefit, instead of letting you run it for yours, and the quite impossible habit which others have of returning to their own jobs, there's too much uncertainty in the business. Besides, every year sees too large a crop of competitors springing up. And, furthermore, finally, it's too expensive."

And for the benefit of all those celebrity hunters who have never taken the time to think along these lines her conclusions are here set down.



The Dissembler

FOR one brief moment Life unveiled her eyes
And looked me steady smiling in the face;
And lo, I felt the breath of spring-touched skies,
And knew the beauty of the Commonplace.

For one short heartbeat there I marked her smile.
That shone as golden glad as springtime sun;
And lo, I feared no future-stretching mile,
And knew each longed-for goal already won.

For one swift thought span she forgot to lie,
Her nimble tongue forgot its wonted way;
And lo, while still her footsteps lingered nigh
I glimpsed the Heaven in the Everyday.

What though her frowning mask were swift redrawn,
Her smile a sneer within a fleeting breath?
I read her heart alone amid the dawn,
And fear no more the page of Life or Death.

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.

SINNERS ALL

BY
GRACE MARGARET GALLAHER

Author of "Roxanna," "The End of the Journey," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN



THERE'S folks a-comin' through th' gate, it's th' min'ster an' 'nother man." Having fulfilled his duty as sentinel at the window, small Daniel Belt dismissed the matter lightly from his mind, and turned that powerful engine upon the serious business of whitening out a boat.

Not so did the news affect his Aunt Octavia, on her knees by the kitchen oven. The look of modest pride with which she had been viewing the delicately browned pies changed to one of alarm, the soft lines of her figure stiffened, and she sprang to her feet, casting about the room a glance of wild surmise. The kitchen was mellowly warm that chill March morning, and spicy from the good baking, but its order was what is known in Pettipaug as "a hurrah's nest."

"They'll freeze in th' keepin' room 'fore ever I can get a fire a-goin'," she lamented to her nephew. "Of all times to come a-callin'!"

She swept the Boston rocker clear of a gay red horse and cart, freed a corner of the lounge from an entangling alliance with a kite, and flew to the door to welcome the visitors. This was no feigned hospitality, either; the wrath at the disturbance of her housewifely plans was only a ripple of wind on the deep lake of her kindness. She beamed down upon a little twig of a man, and caught his hand in hers.

"Come right in, elder, and warm you up this green day o' spring. I ain't had

a dish o' talk with you I don't know when."

Elder Card looked up at the slender creature, vivid as sunlight, and sweet as a flower, and his heart quivered to the memory of another Octavia, her mother, dead long ago, and all the years were in his voice as he answered:

"Mornin', Octavia, daughter; I just stopped in to make you 'quainted with my new assistant, the Reverend Jotham Talbot; he's come to help a lame dog over a stile." The little old parson's voice was so eager, his eyes so alive, people failed to mark his worn face and panting breath.

The Reverend Jotham clenched the girl's warm fingers into his cold hand jerkily. Distressfully thin and lank of figure, his face was yet classic in line, and his eyes, darkly brilliant, held one by the visions they seemed forever viewing, but his lips were shut in the narrow line of bigotry. Octavia, shrewd to note, unversed to interpret, pitied him for "his troubles" written on his young face.

"You two sit for a talk a little. I want to look up your father," suggested the elder. "Jotham, this little girl here can tell you stories about all the folks you've come to work among."

"Father's in th' back lots, fencin'. You wrap you up good now."

She wound his wool muffler around his neck, as if he had been small Daniel.

"Th' elder's in dreadful poor case," she mourned, as he disappeared down the lane.

"I hope to relieve him of many burdens." The young man spoke in a solemn, measured voice. "It's a charge full o' problems."

"My, yes!" breathed Octavia, as be-fitted the daughter of a deacon.

"I have heard of you, Miss Belt, over in my home town of Zoar."

"Heard o' me! Forever!" she cried out in candid amazement that her humble fame should have been blown even to "the Parthians and the Medes and the dwellers in Mesopotamia."

"Your peculiar an'—er—er—unorthodox views upon spiritual matters." The Reverend Jotham spoke like a school-master.

Octavia sniffed delicately, not at her visitor, but at the spicy scent of pies streaming out from the oven. The young man gathered courage, or wrath, and strode on more firmly:

"I deem you reject th' covenant of grace an' take your stand under th' covenant of works."

Octavia drew up her fine brows under her pretty wild hair.

"I guess father would talk better 'bout those subjects," she murmured helplessly.

"I understand you deny yourself to be a lost an' ruined child o' sin."

The girl shook her head at him till all her curls fluttered like little flags around her face.

"Oh, no," she smiled. "I ain't a lost sinner. Why, I ain't had an opportunity to be, me only twenty-one, an' cherished an' taken care of like I am."

"Place an' time are naught." The other's slow voice rose on a higher note. "Th' infant in arms is steeped in sin which he inherits from——"

"My soul!" Octavia's laugh broke in sweet and wholesome. "I guess you ain't wanted to children, are you? They're th' sweetest little creatures, so trustin', an' lovin', an'——"

"Th' human heart is poisoned with

envy, malice, an' all uncharitableness," it was his turn to interrupt.

"Mine ain't," retorted the girl, but without heat. "I don't envy anybody, an' there ain't a livin' soul I wish harm to."

The fitful March sun flecked a shaft of gold over her hair like a halo, and her eyes, blue as a child's, shone as if from some clear flame alight behind them. The Reverend Jotham thought mistily upon some tale of fox woman or witch maiden, and spoke accordingly: "Into th' mind spring foul images, an' horrible visions."

Again Octavia shook her head at him, but he was mounted and off.

"In th' nighttime upon our bed black shapes arise to torture us."

"I don't wake up nights generally," the girl pondered in matter-of-fact seriousness, "but if I do, I have th' prettiest thoughts; how big an' bright th' stars are, an' if it rains how glad th' flowers are of a drink, an' how happy I'm goin' to be come mornin' workin' for father an' th' boys."

"All unbelievers God will punish everlastingly." He was a judge now.

"Now you talk like father," she reproved him maternally, "an' you don't mean a word o' it any more'n he does. Father, he wouldn't hurt so much as a sick kitten, an' God's a thousand times kinder than what th' best o' us are. Why, He's so lovin' we can't even understand th' compassion o' His merciful heart."

The young divine stared at her aghast at his own futility. The cold and sneering skeptic he knew—at least in books—and the truculent blasphemer, but this reverent, loving heretic was a creature outside his ken; one could not play the game of theological controversy with her, for she did not keep the rules. He rose haughtily, his eyes fire, his voice ice.

"You are the chief of sinners, a hardened one."

The girl did not smile at him any more, neither did she contradict him; the poor pleasure of the last word should be his. In deep concern she watched him striding out toward the

barn where in the door a man was mending harness.

"I hope he don't pester the poor ol' elder to death with arguments," she murmured.

That evening in the now-shining kitchen Octavia cooked an early supper, for this was "meetin' night," and the drive to Zion's Hill a long one. Deacon Belt, a rosy, round little man, and his rosy, round son, Sam, hurried in from milking for the extraordinary washings-up incident to meetin' night, and a great blast of wind flung open the kitchen door to thrust in another man.

"Guess we'll be blown out to sea to-night goin' over th' plains," Octavia greeted this last comer. "Pretty rough night, ain't it, Andy?"

Andrew Converse hung his hat on a peg, drew off his overcoat laboriously, fumbled in his pockets, then turned squarely upon her. He was a strong young fellow, with a face set in lines of quizzical humor, and eyes, given him by some forgotten Irish ancestor, that looked out at his world with the unflinching hardness by which so many of the race flag a warning of their fighting strength. He spoke gently, in a deep voice.

"Tavy, I been talkin' to th' new minister to-day."

Octavia waited in silence for more.

"An he 'lows you—you hadn't best go to meetin' any more."

Still she waited, trembling now.

"He had kind o' a discussion with you this mornin', I take it, an' he deems you've grown gospel-hardened, livin' so long 'mong professin' Christians, an' yet

not sharin' their views, an' he thinks maybe it harmful to you goin' to meetin' when you don't fellowship th' worship."

"I do fellowship it," broke out the girl passionately.

Andrew's eyes watched her strangely.

Once, years before, they had talked this over, and he, theoretically disallowing her views, had yet been untroubled by them. Now he spoke with a kind of somber decision, frightening in its newness.

"It's foolishness for you an' me to argue, Tavy; he gave me his view o' things, an' I set my seal to it. You're best at home."

Here was the view of iron that always she had known was hidden deep in his easy, unstressful nature, his strong, religious convictions. She heard her own warm, ardent heart grate against it. She might have flung at him that horses and carriage were her own father's, the the driver her father himself, but she met his sternness only by humility, answering:

"If you say so, Andy. You sit down to supper now; it's all hot."

Andrew looked at her sorrowfully. How pretty she was in her blue frock, with the gold beads around her throat, and a ribbon twisted in her soft hair. Why must she be so perversely set against the Law and the Gospel?

When supper was over, and the men started down the lane, Octavia sat in the still kitchen by the glowing stove, listening to the old carryall creak out on the Gunpowder Road, and die away on the distant plains. The grind of the



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wheels seemed to drone out a farewell to a sweetness past, an announcement of a bitterness now here. Her sensitive fibers quivered to some foreboding. She saw the long road to meetin' like a path in an allegorical tale, by which she herself had traveled joyfully till now.

First she was a flaxen-haired little girl in a pink tyer, running forward to thrust her doll into the hands of the forlorn boy, Andrew, who had come to live at her house because his folks had all gone to heaven. There they were at all the turns of the road, she and Andrew, comrades in a friendship that held no heed of age or sex, till that great day last week when Andrew, on a high mountain, as it were, had told her he had paid the last penny on his farm, and was now his own man. And to-night the road was as if it had run against a wall.

Octavia sprang up restlessly, as if some one called. Then she sank down in her chair, to muse once more. For years the sunniest spot on that road had been their talks driving along toward meetin'. Andrew was afield from dawn till dark; the short evenings before the tired farmers trudged off to bed were spent all together, Andrew playing chess with her father, or reading the county paper. Snug on the back seat of the carriage they could confide their plans to each other while the wheels rattled to drown their voices, or, if their mood was so, sit in a warm, understanding silence.

Sometimes Andrew would reach out to tuck her into the robe, or a jolt over a rut would shake her against his shoulder. Often he took her hand in a strong clasp. Andrew was the best friend she had in the world. She blushed hotly, as if to some other name suggested from outside, and now that foolish sprig of a parson, with his clumsy touch, had dimmed the exquisite surface of their friendship. Not exquisite to Andrew, though, else why so quick to give up its one precious hour?

A horse neighed in the lane. Had the whole evening gone thus sorrowfully?

Andrew strode in, freed from all gloom.

"We had a treat to-night, Tave," as if she had stayed home of her own choice. "You call to mind Emm'line Painter, she that used to visit over on the ridge?"

He seated himself at the table, where she had set out cider and doughnuts.

"Seems as if I did; a good while back."

"She wedded a mission'ry, an' went off to foreign parts. Well, she was to meetin', an' give us all a description of life in India."

"What's she doin' here?"

"The mission'ry he died out there, an' I guess she had a terr'ble tough pull herself to come through, an' she's back to live over to ol' Cap'n Painter's. He's her grandfather, an' all th' kin she's got leff. George! She's got a gift! I don't know as I ever heard a finer speech, right offhand, too, when th' elder called on her."

"What she look like?" A fear, vague as fog, and as chill, oozed about Octavia's heart.

"Look like?" Andrew mused, then laughed. "Not a bit like you, that's as near as I can git it. She's handsome, though. Seems as if she had pretty hair, kind o' thick an' smooth, an' big eyes, an' she looked sort o' exalted an' 'bove th' common run o' things, like you'd expect a mission'ry would." His words came lamely. "She's distressed to give up her work 'mong th' heathen, but she deems she'll find tasks right here at home."

"I guess so." Octavia's voice was dry, as she rose to mix bread. "Cap'n Painter's as big a heathen as you could rout out anywhere in India."

Sunday morning, by a whim of capricious spring, the air was balm of Gilead, the sun a kindly heat, the dogs frisked about, and even the most ancient of mortals felt the fire of youth in his veins. Octavia stood in the doorway, steeping herself in sunshine. She had been awake all night with "jumpin' toothache," and her pale, swollen face was both pathetic and grotesque. She stared amazed as the gate was opened by a strange woman, who walked up the path with the calm of one sure of her welcome. She

was about thirty, short and plump, and by every implication of her being she proclaimed: "I was made for courts and great affairs. I pay my debts, and say my prayers." She had rich, dark hair, parted smoothly above a wide brow, large eyes, mildly regardful under drooping lids, and a sweet, set mouth.

"Good mornin'!" Octavia spoke as cordially as she might through swelled lips. "It's Mis' Emm'line?"

"Emm'line Noyes." The other had a mellifluous voice, that dropped each word with a nice precision of accent. "This must be little Octavia Belt. How the years roll by! You were almost a babe when last I saw you."

Octavia swallowed a laugh. Like Monsieur Jourdan, Pettipaugh talked prose, as it were, instinctively. Sunday-morning calls being unheard of, this elegant lady must have some need.

"Is Mr. Andrew Converse at home?"

Octavia flushed all over her distorted face.

"He's tacklin' up for meetin' Won't you walk in?"

"I, too, am on my way to church," following the girl into the kitchen. "I have no horse, an' I find th' road longer than I remember, so I stopped to see if I might beg a ride from my old neighbor."

"Father'll be glad to take you," an accent on the name.

"Kind, kind," murmured the other, sinking into a chair, her heavy-lidded eyes traveling in amusement over the other's funny phiz.

"Andrew!" called Octavia, and at some note in her voice the big farmer strode swiftly in from the barn.

Emmeline swayed toward him, the silk in her morning dress whispering richly, her widow's cap framing her mild face in a sort of halo.

"Is there room in your heart for a weary wayfarer on th' road to church?" She pinched out each word daintily.

"An' in my carryall, too."

Andrew reached out for her hand, and a red, such as Octavia had never seen there, surged into his weathered cheeks.

"What various hindrances, Lord, we meet in comin' to th' Mercy Seat. But who that knows th' worth o' prayer, But would be often there?"

quoted the stranger.

Octavia, never in a theater, nevertheless snapped inwardly, "play actin'," and marveled that Andrew, the shrewd, should look at her in that awed way.

"I guess we're ready to start." He dropped her hand, as if remembering at last he held it. "Tavy, here, is rastlin' ol' man toothache, an' can't go 'long."

Octavia watched Andrew help Emmeline Noyes into the back seat—her seat—and settle himself beside her, both already deep in conversation.

"India an' mission'ries!" she said bitterly, as she set about dinner. "I ain't got any cause to hurry myself, for they'll have to drive her home to th' ridge. Wonder if Andrew'll be obliged to take her to meetin' nights?" At that her heart contracted with a grip of fright.

The men were late from church, but even before they had eaten their dinner, unusually good, for Octavia had worked off steam in preparing it, they were telling her the news. A former citizen of Pettipaugh, faithful to old allegiances, had sent Elder Card a sum of money to repaint and refurnish "th' meetin'-house," now fallen into disrepair.

"An' we had a meetin' after sermon," the little, round deacon explained, "an' 'lected a committee to take it in charge, an' push it right through for th' anniversary. Andrew, here, he's chairman."

"Oh, I'm glad." Octavia clapped her hands. Honor to Andrew was sweeter than any to herself.

The young farmer took his glories modestly.

"I seemed freer'n some," he explained.

"Who's th' others?"

Sam took up the tale: "The new minister, in place o' Elder Card, an' Deacon Priestly, an' Eli Brainerd, an' Miss Emm'line Noyes."

"Her!"

"It seemed like she was wonted to doin' big things, an' she's seen fine churches in foreign parts." Andrew shifted uneasily in his chair.

"First powwow at her house to-night," went on Sam, in some amusement. "She stood right up in meetin', an' asked 'em to come."

"She sur'ly is a handsome-pearin' woman," Andrew mused. "I don't know when I ever see one prettier in the face."

Octavia covered her swollen cheek with one brown, small hand, and thrust away her plate.

"Tooth a-jumpin'?" inquired her father kindly.

She rose wearily. "I guess I'll lay down a spell."

The men looked at each other, alarmed. When could one of them remember this joyful spirit of the home "complainin'"? In her own room the girl cast herself upon the bed, for the first time in her sweet and happy life poisoned with bitterness against the whole world.

The next afternoon Octavia, healed of her diseases, body and soul, went wandering light and quick of foot as some wood creature, out through the "ma'sh pastures," in search of a certain shy flower, the herald of spring. The sky was a sapphire scroll, tied down to the hills by white cloud ribbons, the air flicked little kind touches on cheek and hair, the marsh pools caught pieces of the sky, and cut them into glimmering jewels, and in the alder bushes by the marge the redbirds called liquidly. Octavia was so brimmed full of gladness that she sang and whistled to the sky, and leaped, a flame of joy, from tussock to tussock. Poised, a winged figure, for a run, she looked beneath her hand across the sun-smitten marsh.

"If that ain't th' new min'ster! He'll



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bog him down in Dick's Slough!" She was off flyingly.

"Stop!" she shrieked at the pitch of her voice, waving him back with both hands.

The Reverend Jotham jumped, flung out his long arms to catch his balance, and plowed forward grotesquely on his knees into the mud.

"Keep still!" now warned Octavia.

But Jotham, red to his ears with raging shame, clawed the air savagely, and drove himself deeper into the mire.

"Here!" From a long-grassed tussock she stretched out a little hardy hand. "It's all quagmire."

The young man turned his crimson face, in which his lips showed a thin line, toward his rescuer in a frenzy of resentment at her eyes, blue sparkles of laughter, at her red lips, running into dimpled corners of mirth, at her whole gay, mischievous self. He would spurn

her aid. Alas, at his first motion of refusal, his knees dug farther into the sucking swamp.

With a look he meant for condescending, he took her hand.

"If you will kindly help me." He bit off each word with a snap, that she might understand he felt no gratitude.

"Now!" she encouraged him.

She pulled, he struggled, and, floundering like a mired cow, he heaved himself up to the tussock beside her.

"Don't ever try a short cut 'gain," she reproved him maternally. "It's just honeycombed with quags."

"Thank you for your assistance," he chilled her. "You take a cut yourself."

"Oh, me; I'm Pettipaug raised." She

laughed back over her shoulder as she ran nimbly over the marsh.

The minister looked ruefully at his "blacks," caked with mud, and Octavia, following his eyes, laughed again, her bubbling laughter as innocently mischievous as a child's.

"Don't touch 'em till they're dry, then they'll all shake off." Was she not used to fending for three helpless men?

The Reverend Jotham, conscious that he was a figure of fun, sought refuge in great dignity.

"Your father an' brother find themselves well?"

"Oh, yes, thank you."

"An' Brother Andrew Converse? He lives with you, I understand?"

"He's a kind o' cousin o' father's," answering the last question, "an' when his folks all died father brought him up."

"He's a young man of great spiritual attainments," he told her pompously.

Octavia's telltale face crinkled into drollery again; this raw boy to pronounce judgment on Andrew, weathered by tests of heat and frost to powerful manhood!

"Ain't it a pretty day?" she cried quickly, to hide her amusement.

The young man caught the quaver of her voice, thought she was mocking his plight, and said awfully:

"An' does the beauty o' nature never bring home to you any sense of your sin?"

Now, indeed, Octavia laughed from her deepest well of mirth; the wonder of the sky above them, the wooing of the very breath itself of spring melting their hearts, to think of sins!

"I ain't got any sins to brood over," very sweetly out of her merriment.

"I said sin," he thundered at her.

Octavia studied his pale, drawn face and meager figure of youth, like a lank tree, all pushing sap, and no steady wood yet, and divine sympathy thrilled her intentions. "He's hungry, poor boy, growing the way he is, an' I'll vow Ann Jane Frizby don't cook him an' th' elder one good meal a day.

"Mr. Talbot," she urged prettily, "you come home to supper. Father an' th'

boys'll be pleased to pieces to see you. They're just reckonin' on talkin' th' new improvements over with you." This for the clergyman, then, as a lure to the boy: "An' I'm a-cookin' 'em th' supper they deem th' best o' th' whole assortment."

Pride and desire fought together in his hot and narrow heart.

"I am due at a meetin' of th' decoration committee at Sister Noyes' this evenin'." Andrew Converse is chairman." He hesitated ungraciously.

A cloud blew over the sun, and a cruel little wind cut at her breast; the world no longer seemed a glimpse of heaven; yet her kindness to him held.

"You can go right from supper over to th' ridge," she urged, beginning to move homeward.

The minister set his long stride to her quick patter as a sign of consent.

"That Mrs. Emmeline Noyes is a most remarkable woman," he told her, "an' her appearance is as beautiful as her nature."

Octavia flung up her head; he, too, a captive to her lure?

"Lik'ly she is a terr'ble good woman," she told herself in her heart; "but she's a play actor all th' same."

"You wer'n't at meetin' yesterday?" he asked next.

"I was sick. I heard you preached a powerful sermon," she answered him.

The Reverend Jotham softened at once.

"It was upon the Mysterious Ways o' Providence. I hope it met th' needs o' men like your father an' Andrew Converse."

A wistful lift in his voice touched her sympathy again; he was a boy far from home with no one to talk to about his latest exploit.

"I'd be pleased to hear an account o' it, Mr. Talbot." She smiled sweetly up into his eyes.

The Reverend Jotham blinked a little, dazzled, he thought, at the sunset, and started off in his pulpit voice as if the slim reed of a girl fluttering by his side were a public meeting.

"I'll bake him hot biscuits an' give him th' best fruit cake," went this girl's

kind thought, while her ears listened to the grim theology of Pettipaug half a century ago.

That whole week quick and delicate days of spring wooed Octavia, a gypsy spirit of wood and glen, out into the open. She hunted waxen arbutus among the hill rocks, or filled her basket with pale windflowers in the sheltered places of the pastures. The new life of field and farm thrilled her to a rapture of living; yet deep in her heart a dark drop lurked that, stirred, would flow out to embitter all the courses of her blood. Would Andrew take her that week to meetin' in the old friendly way? Once she met the young minister, zealous on parish duties, and amazingly he spoke to her kindly, with no mention of sins, original or acquired.

Meetin' day itself was hard to bear, the doubt of its ending heavy upon it; and as the hours went a dry restlessness, alien to her usual content, drove her out into the cool fields. She went along the Ridge Road to see a sick neighbor swiftly, for the pale sunlight of late afternoon already lay thin over the meadow. Where the road forked to the Painter Farm she halted, her ears quick to the wheels of a climbing wagon; some Pettipaug acquaintance who would give her the latest news of the village.

"My soul an' liberty!" she breathed. "It's Andrew in th' carryall. He's goin' up to that mission'ry's."

Andrew greeted her with genial unconcern.

"Hello, Tavy, ain't you lost?"

"Ain't you, Andy?" she flashed back.

The farmer considered her across his horses, as if he really saw her for the first time in his life, and Octavia, under his gaze, had a sharp picture of a plump, natty figure, with smoothly banded hair and tranquil eyes, and she, realizing her own frowzy tow hair and puckered brow, shrank away in a new self-consciousness.

"I left word home for you," Andrew went on, still at his ease. "I shan't be there to supper."

"Where you goin' to get you any?" The question leaped upon him.

The young man hesitated appreciably, but his manner was still unregarding.

"Emm'line Noyes wants me to her house to supper. I agreed to take her to meetin' to-night, an' there's a good few things 'bout th' decoratin' we'd like to get settled."

Octavia managed a pretty smile up at him.

"I guess you'll get a better supper than you would have home. I haven't made a reckonin' on it."

She waved to him a quick flirt of a motion, and was off up the fork of the road.

"Octavia!" Andrew's voice summoned her commandingly.

The girl halted, and there was that in his glance drew her back to him. They looked steadily at one another, the blue eyes and the gray, till the blue ones drooped to hide the tears clouding them. The man spoke slowly and rather sternly:

"It's a queer come-to for you an' me, Tavy, not to drive to meetin' together, an' settle the affairs o' th' nation 'cross th' plains or up Zion's Hill."

Octavia stood like some wary little wood creature, tense to strike or to flee.

"I don't know but what I acted hasty," Andrew labored on, "to take th' advice o' a stranger, who couldn't know the facts as I did, even though he did put th' case strong to me."

A flare of anger scorched the tears where they fringed her eyelids; her eyes burned like blue fire as she cried out upon him:

"I ain't a wicked sinner! I ain't lost an' doomed. I won't say so to please him or you or anybody." She was like a martyr pressing the blazing fagot to her bosom. "You can't make me say so—"

In wild affright at her own heart leaping as if it would be out of her body with all its secrets scored upon it, she went flying up the road, without a glance at Andrew where he sat, pondering across his horses the place in the dust stirred by her feet.

Catching her breath sobbingly, the girl hurried on, still under the stress of bearing witness. In a daze of misery she

did her errand, and in a daze hurried away to her home, that warm in its fold of the hills called to her as a shelter in the world now grown strangely vast. Andrew had offered her a chance to win back into favor; now he must surely hate her for her scorn of him. Yet it was true; how could she say otherwise? Saint she was not, nor ever claimed to be. But she was not a wicked sinner; and she would *never* say she was! She smote her hands together till the palms rang.

Then she was aware of a figure halted before her, and would have hurried on, but the Reverend Jotham Talbot greeted her reprovingly:

"Good evenin', Miss Belt. Gettin' so dark you don't recognize me?"

She bowed distractedly, still out of herself, and moved aside to let him pass. He was not to be shunned thus. The faint spring sunset, the piping of the frogs in the marshes, the chill sweetness of the air, were all playing upon the heart of the boy homesick for his home beyond Zoar, and this slim girl, with red lips curving into laughter and eyes that talked eloquently, seemed a kind and gentle creature set in his path to cheer him.

"I guess I'm goin' your way?" he suggested wistfully.

Octavia's answer to the loneliness in his voice sprang quick in a gay smile.

"Gettin' 'quainted 'mong us?" she asked, and dropped her own secret into the lake of her heart. "I deem you've been up to Deacon Brainerd's."

The young man sighed dejectedly. His face had lost some of its unearthly exaltation, and was blurred with human care.

"There's such a weight o' trouble in the world," like a grieved child.

"There is up to deacon's"—Octavia would wile him out his mood—"an' he's th' most o' it himself."

"He's been a professin' church member for forty years," retorted the boy; "he's an earnest an' faithful Christian."

"Oh, no, he ain't." She shook her head in a funny little sideways motion she had. "He don't steal, nor burn down folks' barns, nor drink hard cider

at th' tavern, but he's a crafty, sour, ol' miser, that plagues his fam'ly ev'ry hour o' th' day with his fantads."

The young divine held up a threatening hand to her, but his mood of weariness lay heavy upon him; he could no more than laugh scornfully, and Octavia, delighted to have shaken him out of his brooding, took up the argument zestfully:

"Religion's not just talkin' an' singin' an' prayin'; there's a whole heap more to it than that."

The other touched her arm.

"We can go over to the Mill Race by this path; th' falls are a pretty sight just now."

"Ain't the bridge down?"

"I crossed safely an hour ago."

A little, dim path under old trees led them downhill to the Mill Race thundering over the dam its flood of freshet water. The narrow bridge flung, without rail or support, across the gulf, trembled beneath their feet.

"Be real kind o' careful," Octavia quivered out, her feet set forward upon the wet planks.

"I have a very steady head," the young man answered, with some of his usual loftiness.

Even as he spoke, his foot slipped, his hands grasped at the air, and in wild and futile struggle he was whirled down to the water boiling up around the black rocks, jagged and knived. His fall broke against a limber tree growing out from the bank, so he slid rather than plunged into the water. The chill of it and the shock of the fall beat him into a moment's blankness, yet of instinct he clung to the bending branch. When he opened his eyes a voice, urgent, piercing, yet sweet, was calling in his ears, like a refrain:

"Catch hold! Catch hold!"

Vaguely he caught at something, and his free hand closed over a stout, woolen rope. Through a blur of water he saw Octavia above him on her knees upon a broad rock shelving out from the bank at the side of the dam, one arm twining about the same life-shielding tree, the other stretching out to him her shawl twisted into a rope. Her slim

body was bent like a bow, her teeth showed where they bit into her lip, her eyes burned like blue lights in her white face. The whole of her was taut with a desperate helpfulness.

The man's numbed mind freed itself to a frenzy of energy. Through the pull and strain of the water, heavy as dead earth, murderous with cruel life, he agonized toward the flag of his hope, the dauntless eyes above him, blue as if the tranquil might of Heaven itself were shining there. The pride of youth that cannot believe in death for itself, the lust of life that clings even to the battered hulk, strove in the boy, lurching and thrashing in the foam. Earth, and water, and air seemed alike his savage foes, the rock that pushed him from its edge, the river that whelmed him in its depths, the breeze that numbed his blood; only one power fought for him, poor, innocent boy, doomed cruelly—the loyal eyes above him.

"Now!" It was like the one kind force of nature finding voice.

A racking strain, a sickening hanging by the edge, then safety. Jotham found himself on his knees beside the girl, his arms holding her in a fierce clasp against his panting breast. She was nothing to him but the stanch rope that had saved him. Then her body, rigid with its labor, slowly softened in his arms, her head drooped forward into the hollow of his shoulder, and a long, sighing breath stirred his hair warmly. In his arms lay a young girl, soft, and warm, and lovely. Into the dry veins of the young anchorite flooded the very ichor of the gods. He drew her up into his arms, pressing her face in beneath his chin, her hair blown across his lips.

She moved in his arms wearily, and said, in a little, gentle whisper:

"You stand up now. You'll give you cold."

Still he held her against his heart, and all her loveliness of face, and voice, and nature stole warmly through his whole spirit, in a wonderful surprise. Octavia forced herself away without any consciousness at all of this strange happening in him, anxious only to get him home to dry clothes.

"You cut 'cross lots quick as ever you can make it," she urged, her hand against his arms. "This is a terrible green day o' spring. You'll be down sick, an' it's meetin' night."

The priest in him stirred. He put her from him, and began to climb the bank, pulling her after him in an unregarding roughness.

"Hurry now!" She smiled at him with infinite sweetness out of her tired, white face.

The Reverend Jotham Talbot ran as if the Furies were on his trail, and not till he reached his own gate did he realize he had not spoken one word of gratitude. He stood, shivering in his dripping clothes, and saw her again, so gay and kind, so sweet and brave, and his whole young, eager soul yearned to hold her in his arms again, his own eternally.

"Seems like there was a sight o' sparkin' 'round these parts this spring." Young Sam Belt, mending harness on the doorstep of his own kitchen, drawled out this reflection one pretty June morning.

"Who's sparkin'?" his sister answered him absently from within, for she was producing an intricate cake.

"Nobody 'special." His drawl was quizzical now. "Warn't th' Reverend Jotham in a reg'lar collar pucker to see father to come over here last night an' stay till midnight?"

"Ten o'clock."

"When father warn't here he has to come 'gain this mornin'."

Octavia's chime of laughter rang with her brother's guffaw; she could not be the prettiest girl in Pettipaug, and be all blind to the signs of a young man's fancy.

"He's a worthy young man, full o' zeal," she admonished him.

"Who's sayin' he ain't? I notice his zeal ain't drawed you into th' fold none." Sam, although a "proffessin' member," had a grain of his sister's levity.

Again Octavia bubbled out: "He don't so much as speak o' it nowadays."

"What does he speak of then th' five

days a week he hangs 'round here?" he grinned at her, then, sinking his voice seriously: "Say, Tave, you view it Andrew's caught yet? Th' Widow Emm'line's smart as a trap."

A slow, cruel red crept up into Octavia's face; her hands gripped the molding board.

"So is Andrew." The words came hard.

"I donno—not like that he ain't." The boy fumbled for an explanation of the weakness of his sex in the hands of artful woman.

"She's a good woman, Sam," heavily.

"Good 'nough, but she ain't Andrew's kind."

"Who—who is his kind?" Her voice sounded small to herself.

"Well, I dunno as I can say," confessed the boy. "I ain't ever thought o' ol' Andrew tewed up with any woman. Thought he'd live 'long here always, you housekeepin' for him— What say?"

For Octavia had uttered a queer cry.

"Pinched my finger."

"But he's all took up with her now; drives her to meetin' every night, has his supper over there more'n once, runs over middle o' th' mornin' to draw water an' split wood, an' all like that. Call it committeein' over th' church, eh? I say he's got a powerful attack o' love sickness."

"Who has?"

Both jumped guiltily at the big voice, and Andrew himself in the woodshed door.

"Th' young parson," Sam brazened it off, and then "lit out," in his own phrase, for the barn.

Andrew laughed dryly.

"Guess he won't die o' it. Ain't got blood 'nough in him to kick up much o' a fever."

"You don't like him?" faintly from the girl.

Andrew fixed her with an odd glance.

"Why, yes, I do. He's an upright fellow enough, but pretty light on th' weights, as I view him."

Octavia flashed him an eloquent look. In classic form it said: "And yet you took his voice who should be pricked in your black sentence."

"Who Sam deems he's after?" he went on. "Spends best part o' th' day up to Emm'line Noyes?"

Octavia laughed out in bitter mirth. Was Andrew so daft over that woman he believed all mankind sought her only?

"Like 'nough she's th' one."

Andrew drew nearer.

"Makin' bread, Tavy? I wish you'd carry a loaf up to Emm'line's, an' a glass o' jelly, or some such trade. Cap'n Painter's hauled up for repairs, an' she's so cumbered with him she can't cook a proper meal o' food."

"Can't she hire her a nurse?" she trembled out.

"Nonsense!" brusquely. "She ain't got th' money to throw away like that. You step up to th' ridge this afternoon; it's a pretty day for a walk."

Andrew was several years her elder, and accustomed to command her in a bluff and brotherly fashion. Now he nodded in his half-kindly, half-quizzical way, as on a good child, and strode off to his plowing, leaving the girl staring at the sunlight on the floor in a still anger that chilled her very bones.

Yet the delicate serenity of the late



R. Emmett Owen
Andy.

afternoon saw her climbing the hill to the old Painter Farm, lying warm and silent in the sun. She knocked at the kitchen door, then in neighborly fashion pushed it open.

"My country! It's fit to frighten th' French!" She stood aghast at the empty room.

The scraps of a hasty meal lay about on the table, shared by a cat and her kittens, which had upset the milk jug over the floor. Dishes from a still earlier time were piled, a precarious tower, in the sink, and an open door showed the blankets of an unmade bed trailed over the floor. Picking her steps daintily, Octavia sought "th' forerroom," and there a sweet voice answered her:

"Walk right in."

By the open window, sun-shaded by white curtains, and perfumed by a bowl of damask roses, fair, and smooth, and bland, Emmeline was sewing daintily.

"May you always be blessed in basket an' store!" she said richly as she unpacked the gifts which Octavia, in scorn of her own rage, had prepared in lavishment. "Sit by th' window to cool you; you're greatly heated."

Octavia yearned to be gone at once, but no way of escape opening to her, perched herself on the edge of a chair, as one bent on flight.

"I'm makin' me a white waist," Emmeline smiled on. "Last time Andrew Converse was here he said my mournin' depressed his spirits, so I'm hurryin' to get it done for th' committee meetin' here to-night, for I do believe it's our duty to cheer those around us in every way we can, don't you?"

"I guess so," faltered Octavia.

"My kitchen is a shockin' sight," rocking and sewing tranquilly. "I hav'n't time to sew an' clean up, too." She sighed patiently.

"Emmy, ye come shake up my pillow!" a querulous old voice commanded.

"Yes, gran'ther." Emmeline went at once to an inner room. "Poor ol' man!" she murmured as she came back.

"Emmy, ye straighten out this rug; ye lef' it all catawuncus."

Smilingly as ever, she went again to

the sick captain. Kind little Octavia blushed to a pang of swift pity. "She does have it hard all 'lone, here," she thought, and aloud she said warmly: "You want I should sew on your waist while you fix up th' kitchen? I'm real quick with my needle."

"Dear, helpful child!" cooed the widow. "But I couldn't bear to have you attempt this work; it's so fine it's tryin' to th' eyes and th' nerves. No, I'll bear th' strain o' it, if you'll just wash up a few o' my dishes in th' kitchen."

Octavia gasped as the piles of greasy pans ranged themselves up before her dismayed eyes, but without one glance at the placid figure that sat on a cushion and sewed a fine seam, she stalked out of the room for a furious onset upon the kitchen.

The June sunshine paled to a tender twilight before Octavia had scoured the last pan, and set it in its place on the dresser, and not till then did the owner of the kitchen appear, dressed now in the finished waist.

"Oh, the kind, kind hands that have labored for me!" she murmured liquidly. "Does my waist set well?"

She wheeled slowly to show her neat figure in the crisp muslin, with the little curling frill around the throat.

"It's lovely," Octavia confessed, although she longed to cry out on it as a fright.

"So kind, so kind!" She drew near Octavia, and laid a white and handsome hand upon her arm. "Dear child, if only you were a believer! First th' deep an' heavy conviction o' sin must overwhelm us, before we can enjoy th' rapture o' belief."

"In Adam's fall
We sinned all,"

quoted Emmeline from the "New England Primer."

Octavia had a strange sense of fighting in the last ditch, but strove for calmness.

"There's no sense to that, when Adam lived thousands o' years before we were born. I ain't splendid an' noble, like some are"—she thought the widow

smiled consciously at this—"but I ain't a great sinner, either."

"Poor child, you—— Who's that?" she broke off abruptly. "My soul! It's Andrew Converse!"

"Evenin'!" Andrew's big voice sounded cheerily. "Octavia in there? I'll pick her up for home."

Emmeline went out with amazing swiftness while Octavia, panting yet from battle, stood stone-still. She heard a murmur of voices, then Andrew's strong one:

"Knew him in India, an' he's goin' to speak over to th' meetin'. Of course, I can manage it. Now, let's see. When you say it'll be?"

"She's askin' him to take her somewhere," Octavia thought wildly. "Of course, they're tokened; she wouldn't dare do it if they wer'n't."

She crept toward the door in a cruel curiosity. Andrew was speaking again.

"Now, that happens bad. To-morrow, Uncle Sam'll have to have both th' horses to drive to Guilford." He seemed to ponder. "See here! We'll sail over. Tide'll come just right both ways, an' if we start smart an' early we'll make it all complete."

She heard the widow making swift arrangements. Then, all smiles: "Andrew's a-waitin' to carry you home," she told the girl.

As they drove in the cool dusk, Octavia suffered a fury that was as new and strange to her sweet life as it was fearful; her veins ran poison, her heart heaved with a sick loathing, and all the time she sat as still as an image, and Andrew spoke only to his horses. As they drove into the lane he said abruptly:

"You made a master long visit on th' widow. I hadn't much hopes o' findin' you."

Octavia's quick brain flashed to itself: "He didn't come to get me; that was just his excuse."

Aloud she said coolly:

"She was sewin'." And turned her face from him as she climbed out.

"Say, Tave," he called to her.

"Well?"

"I tol' Emm'line I'd sail her over Ni-

antic way to-morrow. There's a big kind o' meetin', an' a friend o' hers, that was a mission'ry, is goin' to speak. She's terr'ble set on goin'."

Octavia looked carefully at the toe of her boot, patting the dust into a mound.

"Well?"

Andrew halted perceptibly; hitherto all embarrassments had been strange to his cool directness.

"I'm goin' to take her in th' *Swallow*," he managed at last.

She would not help him; indeed, she could not, her breath was so quick and little.

"It's a mighty big boat for one man to sail," he went on, "an' you're as handy a mate as I want."

Still she kept her eyes down, her foot restlessly patting.

"Come, Octavia, get a day off, an' sail over with us. You an' me, we'll take our own pleasure on th' river, an' Emm'line she can hear th' speeches."

All the dead summers trembled into life in the girl's troubled heart. Through many golden hours she and Andrew had beat against the shouting breeze and flying spray around Hatchet's Reef, or swept with wide-filled sail serenely up past the light. Perhaps Andrew meant to be kind again; perhaps it was only committee bonds that drew him to Emmeline. She lifted her eyes, shadowy with her thoughts, and the sweetest little blush was in her cheeks.

"I'll go, Andy."

The day broke in a wild clamor of wind and a flashing of white clouds across the sky, blue as some Indian pigment; the air bit like October.

"Tain't any day I should choose for a vi'yage," Sam remarked as he watched Octavia start for the river.

But Octavia only laughed. Afraid on her kind old river? And it was a morning to free the blood of all dark dregs. That whole day, as well as its end, stayed in the house of memory for Octavia forever. All morning they flew before half a gale, the sun like molten gold on the water, the spray salt on their lips. Emmeline sat well forward in the shade of the house, Andrew

steered, Octavia watched beside him, quick to help him shorten sail or haul in the jib. Neither spoke a word; to such sailors speech was a dimming of the glory of that windy flight through the sea. If she and Andrew could but surge on thus forever, her heart and brain swept clean of all its sick fancies by the great winds of heaven!

By noon they made harbor in the town where the meeting was held, ate their lunch on the boat, and sought the church.

"Octavia," Andrew announced at the door, "I got to see a man 'bout some cattle. You go in to th' meetin' with Emm'line. I'll call for you 'fore it's over."

Octavia hesitated. Stive herself up indoors on such a royal day! And why she, if Andrew could march afield? She knew about cattle as well as he. But Andrew pushed her forward masterfully: "Go right on in."

It was hot and dark in the church, all the windows, from immemorial custom, battened down, the blinds closed, lest sun and air fade the carpet; and the speakers' voices were old and droning. Octavia dozed, and woke, and dozed again, but asleep or awake she was in a dream of content, for surely Andrew was her friend of old time, and would never be disloyal to her. She gave him a shy little smile from her corner, as he entered quietly to a back seat. At that very moment the leader of the meeting said:

"We have with us a dear sister returned from the mission field. Will Sister Emmeline Noyes give us a few words?"

Without a pause to catch her breath, Emmeline moved serenely forward to the platform, and from it she faced her audience, tranquil, commanding. In her measured sweetness she began at once:

"Dear friends of my spirit." And there flowed from her speech, strong, uplifted.

Octavia, in her obscurity, gasped aloud. Why, Elder Card himself had no such masterly eloquence! Emmeline's face was alight from inner fires, her mild eyes burned.

"My soul!" breathed the girl. "She an' th' young parson have got a gift!"

She stole a glance at Andrew where he sat, his body slightly bent forward, one hand clenched on his knee, and his keen eyes set on the speaker's face with a kind of strange glow. She shrank back into herself. What gift had she to charm a man of parts like Andrew? What was she but "a plain, blunt one that loved her friend, and spoke right on what she did know."

The sun was lost behind a wall of ugly black clouds when they came out into the world again, and all the dance and sparkle of the day was gone; the wind shrieked forebodingly, and spits of rain flicked the dust. Andrew whistled low.

"How 'bout you girls spendin' th' night here?" he asked. "We're goin' to get some weather afore we're through with it."

"An' you sail home alone?" cried the widow, in soft reproach. "Remember, I come of a line of sailors, an' tar runs in my blood."

Octavia said nothing; Andrew knew she wouldn't fear a gale from the pole. She followed after them on soft feet, Emmeline holding Andrew's arm while she told him of the speeches. A breath of the cold wind smote Octavia's heart as she watched him help Emmeline aboard with gentle care.

"You put on my slicker an' sou'wester," he urged her. "We're goin' to take in more'n a cupful o' water."

"What will little Octavia wear?" Her "little" made of the girl a poor, slight creature.

Andrew did not raise his head from the rope he was loosening.

"Oh, she's an' ol' salt same as me."

It seemed to Octavia his voice was indifferent.

She leaped on board, and while he hoisted sail stood ready to cast off the bowline. The sail filled instantly, and they were off, a white streak under the dark sky. The wind had hauled more to the north, so they had not a sheer beat home, but ran before it on a long, swooping tack, and brought up on a



Vaguely he caught at something, and his free hand closed over a stout, woolen rope.

jolt for the short one. The wind roared, the cordage creaked shrilly, and the spray flew high over them. Andrew, his teeth set on the stem of his cold pipe, braced stiff the straining tiller, his eyes hard on the sea and the peak of his sail. Octavia held the sheet in her hand, ready on the instant to haul in or slack up as he commanded. They were like one brain acting through two pairs of hands. Neither paid the least heed to the huddled figure by the house. Only once in the long beat did they speak other than the short commands and answers.

"If we can make th' light before

dark," Andrew shouted, "we'll stow in there, an' go home in th' mornin'."

"We can't!" shrieked back Octavia, and pointed.

As she spoke the sun leaped out an angry fire, then sank behind the rim of the world, and night began to roll the curtain down from the sky.

"We got to!" shouted Andrew. "We can't be caught out in th' Sound in this gale."

He drew in his breath deeply, and nodded a smile, as if to show her there was really nothing unusual in this wild rush of wind and sea. "Can you keep her steady a minute while I shake out

a reef?" He motioned toward the tiller.

Octavia put her hands on the smooth stick above his.

"Mind, now," he said sternly, "you got to hold her as she is, an' she's buckin' like a horse."

Octavia gave him her blue eyes in a gaze as hard as his own, and they told him wordlessly that every ounce of her flesh and nerve of her courage was centered in the grip of her two hands.

The solemn calm that infolds the world when the sun is dead soothed the gale; the sloop no longer tore the water into pieces in its trail.

"This won't do," muttered Andrew, and shook out another reef.

Night blackened around them. A cold rain chilled them to the bone. Instantly, without warning, in a screech of fury the tempest flung itself upon them again. The slender boat reeled till her sail lay flat over the water, righted with a lurch that wrenched the mast loose in its stepping, and darted landward in one leap.

There was a grinding jar, a rock and reel, and then the sloop stood still, quivering and panting like a horse reined in.

"She's struck on th' Spider!" Andrew shouted. "Is she fillin'?"

Octavia flung herself on her knees in an inch of water.

"A little by th' house."

"Get th' bailer! In th' house! Bailer like kingdom come!"

Another voice, faint and distressed, rose in the darkness:

"Are we wrecked? Oh, is all lost?"

"Wrecked!" Andrew managed a bluff laugh. "The next wave'll lift her, an' I'll beach her below th' Spider. Work, Tavy!"

"Oh, yes! Bailer, bailer!" implored Emmeline. "I'll pray!"

The freakish wind had dropped again, and now there was only the sound of the waves and the slash of the rain, beating down in torrents upon them. Above it rose the voice of Emmeline, clear, strong, and passionate, beseeching safety of High Heaven. Octavia, bend-

ing, rising, bending, shook with wild laughter, then cried out upon her:

"Get th' other bailer, an' *work*; that's more needed than prayin'."

But the other did not heed; her voice rose and fell like a chant, and cold, rain, and peril only urged on her eloquence.

In a moment the sloop lifted and slipped off the reef, then, settling quietly under them, began to fill with gentle persistence.

"She's all right," Andrew's big, strong voice came like a beam from the light. "She's in just two or three feet o' water. Look out for your heads now, sail's a-comin' down!"

"Let me help!" shrieked Octavia.

"Lordy, no! Keep on bailin'."

Octavia strained her eyes in the darkness to see if she could make out any design in the welter of sea, and sails, and rocks. Emmeline's voice reached her more faintly; she must have taken refuge in the cabin, warm out of the rain. She herself was chilled to the bone, cramped and weary; a loose rope lashed her like a flail, the broken edge of the rusted dipper cut her hands. Anger flamed out in her, and she cried furiously:

"Stop prayin'! Help me bail!"

Emmeline did not answer, and Octavia dared not leave her task to shout in her ears. The sloop rocked to a great splash, the anchor was overboard.

"You let me in to get my lights." Andrew's voice was sharp and cool. "An' we'll go ashore. Tide's risin' on us. It won't do to hang 'round here long."

Octavia felt him grope past her, then a voice shrieked out in anguish:

"Oh, save me! Save me!"

"Just let me light up." How comforting Andrew's big, solid strength was! "Here we are, all complete. Ketch hold o' my arm."

He stumbled out of the cabin, lifting high a lighted lantern in one hand; the other arm was around Emmeline.

"There ain't more'n two feet o' water now; we'll wade ashore, all snug as you please," he cheered her.

Emmeline clasped both her arms around him, and buried her face in his breast.

"I can't!" gaspingly. "If I step into that black water I shall die! I shall die!"

"Don't need to step into it then," good-humoredly. "I guess I can make out to fetch you ashore."

"Oh, will you carry me? Oh, dear Andrew!" She gripped his shoulders with all her strength.

"Sure. Just let go a spell."

Freeing himself gently, he climbed to the gunwale, let himself drop overboard, held up the lantern, and stretched out his free arm to her.

"Think you can carry th' light if I can carry you? Easy now."

The widow's answer was to slip over the side into his arm. The man caught her in a strong clasp.

"Follow right after me, Octavia," he shouted to the girl, and started with a plunging splash.

Octavia, all her muscles knotted, crawled to her feet.

"He'd just as soon I stayed aboard an' was drowned," she told herself, in a black despair.

Yet, that she might not add one straw's weight to Andrew's burden, she climbed over the side into the water. It was frightfully cold, and beat up to her waist. The rain poured upon her head, the wind shook her by the shoulders. The lantern sent only a thin shaft back to her, and Andrew's figure was just a bulk in the blackness. She shut her lips hard to keep down a gasping cry. Andrew need not remember even that she was there. She waded on steadily, following the light, once sinking into a hole, once stumbling forward so that she was wet through. At last she staggered up on the stony beach.

Andrew was standing there, waiting, Emmeline held in the circle of his arm, and at that sight Octavia could have flung herself into the sea. Andrew's face was streaked with red lines of strain, and beaded with drops not of the rain, but he spoke as coolly as ever:

"All hands ashore, eh? This is just about th' most God-forsaken piece o' beach in New England, but I calc'late if we strike up over th' pastures we find some sort o' habitation."

The widow, snug in her slicker and sou'wester, answered sweetly:

"We owe our lives to you. How can we ever thank you? So brave, so calm!"

Andrew smiled, Octavia thought tenderly: "To-morrow's time 'nough for that. We got to tramp now."

"Go on, you two hardy spirits; I am so exhausted I will lie here on th' beach till mornin'," Emmeline answered, in gentle despair.

"Exhausted!" raved Octavia inwardly. "An' she hasn't done a stroke o' work, just kep' warm an' dry in th' cabin!"

"You lean on me hard; I'll get you 'long all right."

Andrew drew the plump little figure, grotesquely squat now in the slicker, up the beach. This time he did not even call to Octavia. She toiled after him up the rough and rutted pasture slope, catching her feet in roots, falling over stones, bruising her face and tearing her hands, sobbing with weariness and with a desolation black as the night. Her sodden skirts wound themselves around her knees, cutting like cords, her thin jacket was drenched through by the storm. Sometimes she feared she should die, sometimes she longed to. In that endless night Andrew called back to her, "All right, Tave?" and she found strength out of her passionate pride to answer:

"Yes."

Once he waited for her, and she saw in the dim light Emmeline tenderly supported in his arms.

After miles of wandering, like the futile journeyings of a dream, they turned into a lane, at the end of which shone a light. Octavia started forward, tripped, and fell heavily, stones clattering under her. She lay prone in the mud. Surely Andrew would come to her now. Not even a hail told her that her state concerned him, and she staggered up and on. The farmhouse door opened. Andrew lifted his burden over the threshold, then strange people came to help her.

Octavia's pliant young body took no



"Get th' other bailer, an' *work*; that's more needed than prayin'."

harm from her night's adventure beyond a stiffness in her free movements and a spiritless languor. The next day she, Andrew, and Emmeline were driven home by the farmer whose house had been their refuge. Emmeline was propped up by pillows, and pressed smelling salts against her pale lips, but Octavia sat erect as ever, and the red of a consuming fire of anger burned bright in her cheeks.

As they drew into her yard, three men came forward to meet them, and one was the Reverend Jotham Talbot.

"Here you be, safe an' sound," Deacon Belt greeted them cheerily. "I said Andrew was a master for takin' care o' things. I didn't fret none, but parson, here, he's been all in a stew for fear you was drowned off Hatcher's Reef."

He kissed Octavia as he lifted her out.

"Daughter, now, don't seem to have

took much harm from th' jaunt, judge from her color."

Jotham ran forward, and seized both Octavia's hands without any pretense of concealment.

"It was a fearful storm," he said tremulously. "No small boat could live in such a gale. An' when you didn't come back last night——" He broke off with a choked sound.

For an instant the girl, tired in body and sick in soul, leaned against his sleeve. Here was one who cared piercingly whether she lived or died. She still held his hand unconsciously, as she said:

"Come in, every one, an' you'll hear all th' adventures o' our voyage."

A great moon rode high in heaven, and the night was still and sweet; only the rose petals strewn in the garden path and the broken branches of locust,

heavy with perfumed blossoms, remembered the strife of yesterday.

Octavia, moving listlessly, showed as a white blur under the trees of the apple orchard. Her errand was a homely one—linen bleaching on the grass—but she might have been a sad little spirit “revisiting these glimpses of the moon.” The young minister, deep in theology with the deacon, lost the clew to his involved thesis, as the flutter of her dress caught his glance, and broke off abruptly:

“Well, neither you nor I can settle these problems; I’ll bid you good evenin’, sir.”

He turned down the lane, but where the orchard wandered out into it through broken bars he called, swift and low:

“Octavia!”

The girl seemed to float toward him in the blue light, her eyes looked deep and strange, as if she were held in a trance, and her fair face was flushed to rose red. The boy caught in his breath. Was this flower of faery sweet and wild Deacon Belt’s daughter, of the Plains Farm? He forgot the words he had planned of dignified wooing, worthy the assistant elder of Pettipaug Parish, and flung himself through the bars to clasp her in his arms. Yet, with her breath warm upon his cheek, he halted, awed by the magic of her beauty.

“I never saw, Octavia, any one like you. You are so beautiful! I love you. I love you!”

The girl looked up at him with her rapt eyes, swaying a little, like a tall flower in the wind.

“Do you?” she thrilled. “Do you?”

“Oh, I do! I never meant to wed. I consider it unwise in a young clergyman, but I can’t think of anything but you. I am not yet established—but—oh, Octavia!” he rushed on torrentially.

Octavia laid a slim hand on his wrist, and although the touch was burning it soothed him.

“You haven’t known me three months,” she warned him gently. “How can you tell?”

“You are so sweet. I never saw any-

body like you, not in Zoar, nor Pettipaug, nor Boston. I never looked at a girl before, dear. I swear that. You believe me, don’t you, dear girl?” He flushed hotly in his efforts to prove his innocence. “An’ that’s why I prize you like I do, with all my strength, an’ mind, an’ heart.”

Octavia’s lips quivered.

“Why do you?” she trembled out. She raised her face close to his.

“You’re so sweet, so—so—so—lovely.”

The boy lost all hold on time and space, the world was nothing but that slender figure, that beautiful face.

She touched his hand with little, soft movements, and a long, heartbreaking sigh shook her like a reed. How strange that to-night when her whole body thrilled to the fever of her anger, he should tell her that. Yet how like balm on a fevered wound! He found her fair, who was himself, even in his youthfulness, good, and wise, and exalted. Could she not rest in this love, and fill with its richness the lonely, empty room of her heart, and lave with its freshness the parched land of her spirit? Slowly these thoughts throbbed through her tired mind. And communing within herself she did not speak.

“You do believe me, Octavia?” urged the boy brokenly. “How I prize you! It’s against my will, almost, that I tell you this, for I’m not ready to wed, but I couldn’t hold onto myself. It seems as if all I feel to you just flooded my spirit like a tide, so as to drown me.”

She felt the breath of his pulpit eloquence, but no zeal for souls ever shook his voice thus, or blazed in his lighted eyes. His hands were clenched together in front of him, as if he dared not touch her yet, and she took his hard fist into her own slim hold. Her lips curved in a flicker of a smile that he had never once spoken of her love for him; he was swept away in the sea of his wonder at the greatness of his own emotion. It was fortunate so. She didn’t hold him in the place where he held her, but neither did she Andrew any more, and it was sweet to be so cherished. So she stroked his hands,

and listened to the outpour of his young adoration in a daze of sad content, and by and by knew, with only a tremor of amaze, his arms around her. She rested her head in the hollow of his shoulder, and quivered to the sweetness and the peace of being loved. The boy freed one hand to lay it on her hair in a shy tenderness, trembling and flushing like a girl.

"There's folks comin'." She slipped from his arm.

He strove to kiss her once, but elusive as a moonbeam she brushed her hair across his lips and was gone, without a sound.

Jotham shrank back against the shadows, for Andrew Converse came swinging down the lane, but as he did not speak the lover decided he was unseen.

That night Octavia in her white bed in the moonlight dreamed pretty dreams, of love and lovers, and smiled in her sleep, and woke to remember Jotham, and dreamed happily again.

But:

"Yes," I answered you last night,

"No" this morn I say,

Colors seen by candlelight

Do not look the same by day.

When Octavia woke in the chill sweetness of the summer dawn, and looked out across the grass, glistening with the frail, swift-spun nets of the spiders, her eyes rested upon Andrew, coming in from early milking. He fashioned forth no figure of romance before her; his clothes were mended and earth-stained, his shoulders were bent under the yoke of the milk pails, his old hat was pulled low over his face, and that wore a taciturn workaday expression. Yet, as if some alien voice had cried it in her ears, she knew it was not to be loved, however greatly, nor a lover, however kind, she yearned for, but just one plain quiet man, her kinsman, Andrew. And love "that bittersweet, wild thing that none can tame," sprang up from its sleep in her tired heart, and wept and strove within her to be free, till weak and trembling she sank down by the window and rested her head on its ledge in desolation.

Then she began to dress in a passion

of haste. She remembered once, when she was a child, and fell, crying out valiantly: "No, no, it shan't hurt." It should not hurt her now. And why should she suffer? Her thoughts raced while her fingers trembled over buttons and strings. She had done no wrong. She creep and crawl in agony, and that wicked woman walk serene in happiness!

Then her thoughts spun buzzing like a wheel slipped from its groove to Emmeline. She was the maker of all this bitter coil. If she had not fastened upon Andrew, their sweet serenity of friendship would never have been jarred. He would soon have forgotten the admonitions of the new parson, that "light on th' weights," and they would have driven off to meetin' that very night to tell each other their tender secrets under the kind moon.

Octavia caught the stair rail in her hands at these memories. Her hatred swelled into her throat like some poison foaming up. All the spite, and jealousy, and rage, spread thinly through the lives of many women, strange to her sweet wholesomeness all her days, were swept into one black pool of fury. She hated Emmeline Noyes, who had spoiled her life, and somehow and somewhere she would hurt her till the pain of it should be like her own.

Through all that beautiful day of June, Octavia stepped capably about her usual tasks, her hands busy at a dozen housewifely arts, her mind thudding out one single tune: "I hate her!"

Late in the afternoon she locked the kitchen door, hid the key under the mat, and started toward the village on an errand for the house. "All in the blue, unclouded weather," the world was vocal with birds, and aromatic with bud and bloom. Old friends to Octavia called to her from trees and thickets, loved faces peeped at her from the grass, and waved from the bushes. She heard and saw them not at all. Only the voice of her anger mocked her, only the face of her hatred swam before her.

And suddenly there was Emmeline Noyes herself, driving to the village in an old chaise hitched to her neighbor,



The colt reared high when she sprang upon him, reined in by his driver's jerking hands.

Deacon Brainerd's, fiery colt. Emmeline drove in masterly fashion, the reins held high; but the girl, remembering the night in the boat, laughed out. She knew the thin fiber of Emmeline's nerves. If the colt should run!

Absorbed in her journey, Emmeline did not see Octavia, and the girl crept close to a tree, then climbed over the wall, and footed the way swiftly by a short cut known to her. She mounted a little hill, ran down through the thick-growing bayberry and sweet fern, and was once more out on the Pettipaug Road. The stretch before her was no longer a part of the highway, but a wooded lane, deserted of most travelers, still kept open by the thin trickle of traffic from the ridge and the plains. It was dim and still under the thick branches, through which dapples of sunlight flickered from the blue above.

Octavia ran like a wood creature, her

flying feet soundless on the moss; she wanted to be over the ridge beyond the fork of the road before Emmeline's long detour should bring her in sight. Out into the sunshine she flitted, only to halt with a spring. A barrier of rails fenced her way. The antiquated old bridge over the creek was down, and the tide water ran by unfettered. Panting against the rails a moment, she saw that a plank bridge was built for footmen, only wagons might not pass. Even her slender weight swayed the flimsy barrier, and one of the rails fell clattering. The town fathers had made but a poor piece of work of guarding the dangerous gap.

Octavia's face, scarlet from her speed, went white, then gray! Her lips drew into a savage line, she shook all over, and a muscle in her cheek twitched. Her hands were steady as stones, as she tore down the rails and

flung them at the side of the road. Now let Emmeline drive down the hill and round the bend to open water! She crossed the footbridge at a quick walk, turned up the road out of sight, and sat down on a rock. Had Emmeline reached the edge? Was she over it now—horse, chaise, and driver entangled in one struggling mass?

The sky went black above her, the fields were blank. She had murdered Emmeline Noyes! Then sky and grass grew again a horrible cruel blue and poisonous green, and she was flying, a mad creature, back across the bridge, and stumbling, her breath stabbing her like a sword, up the hill.

The colt reared high when she sprang upon him, reined in by his driver's jerking hands.

"What has happened?" Emmeline's voice was tremulous with shock.

Octavia could only point down the road and motion away. When she could speak she panted out:

"Bridge down! Turn 'round!"

She took the colt, sidling and fidgeting, by the bridle, backed him handily, and flicked him with her hand.

"Won't you come, too?" called Emmeline, as he plunged forward.

Octavia shook her head. She could hardly move for weariness and terror, yet she crept back to the edge of the break, and shaking, as if palsied, built up again the poor barrier. Then she sat down on the trunk of a tree, fallen by the roadside, and leaned her head against its strong companion. The world now seemed a very still place, and a very beautiful and pure one, filled with good and wise men and women "who underprop with daily virtues Heaven's top." Even Emmeline, once so scorned, seemed a kind soul enough now, and of no significance one way or another, in her own life.

She alone sat there seared to the soul with the black sin of hatred and the flaring brand of murder. She who once proclaimed herself no sinner! "Foul images," "horrible visions," all the theological phrases of Jotham Talbot crowded her mind, and she heaped them upon herself. She covered her face

with her hands and wept, and Emmeline, and Andrew, and happiness, and even love itself were all swept away in the stream of her tears. Only the great desolate fact of her sin remained like some huge ugly boulder in the current.

"Great king! You here!" A deep voice hailed her heartily, then on a quick note of alarm: "You hurt you?" Andrew himself stood beside her, the bridle of his horse over his arm. "You tell me what's to pay," he commanded roughly.

But when he drew down her hands and saw her face, seamed in misery, he said gently:

"What is it, Octavia, dear girl? Can't you let on 'bout it to me, even?"

"I've murdered Emm'line Noyes," Octavia told him in a dead calm.

Andrew stared.

"I met her a piece back on th' road," he said carefully, as if he feared for her mind.

"I've murdered her in my heart."

"Oh, if it's that!" he laughed out in his relief. "I guess it hasn't hurt her any to speak of."

He twisted the bridle into the branch of a tree, and sat down beside her.

"I'm a lost an' ruined sinner. Jotham Talbot said so, an' he was right."

Andrew made a sound under his breath like an angry oath.

"What's he want to keep long with you for, then, if he thinks so poorly o' you?"

"He said we were all sinners."

Octavia shook herself out of her trance of suffering to vindicate the young parson from any individual strictures.

"Yes, yes, so we are." Andrew assented to this great theological truth with the impatience of one who deemed it of no special significance in relation to the actual case before them. "But what set you off on that track now?"

"I murdered Emmeline in my heart."

Again Andrew looked at her as if he thought her crazed. "Quit such foolishness, Tave," he told her, but gently still.

"I tore down the bars in front o' th' broken bridge when she was comin'."

"Hello! Bridge broke? First I heard o' it."

"I put them up again in a minute. But I'd murdered her in my heart." She swayed a little, as to a sort of dreamy rhythm.

"Stuff!" retorted Andrew abruptly. "What you want to do that for?"

"I hated her," simply, "because you set so high by her, but I don't any more. I wish her well, an' you, too."

She smiled wanly through the dimness of her tears. Then something broke in her sad preoccupation, and she felt the potency of Andrew's presence, and thrilled to it as of old.

"What's that to you when you're tokened to th' young parson? He kissed you in th' orchard last night." Now some innér thing throbbed in the man's voice, too.

"Did he?" as if it were of no moment. "I was tokened to him just for a moment in th' moonlight, but I ain't now. I deemed I prized him—like a girl should for that—but I know now I don't."

"What's he been hangin' 'round our house for all these weeks, followin' at your heels like a pet dog?" He laid his hand on her shoulder, and shook her in his urgency.

"Poor boy!" breathed the girl gently.

"Octavia Belt, you tell me th' truth." Andrew's breath came hard, as if he had been running. "Don't you prize that man none at all?"

Octavia shook her head slowly in a long denial, strong as words.

Andrew gave a great sigh, like a sob.

"An' I plowed from here to Pond Meadow an' back, sixteen mile, last night, to get 'way from him holdin' you in his arms!"

He laid her two hands up around his neck.

"Think I was goin' to hitch up with th' widow?" he put it to her smilingly.

Octavia's blue eyes beseeched him dumbly to let her go.

"She's a talented woman, dear, ain't she? An' a very spiritua'l-minded one," he went on.

"Oh, yes," breathed the girl humbly.

"An' I'd admit in court I was drawn

to her, from th' first, an' I took a considerable amount o' pleasure in her society. Then come that night when we grounded on th' Spider, an' she was so everlastin'ly took up with prayin' an' keepin' herself dry. That kind o' finished her with me, especially as I hadn't ever prized her—like a man does his—wife."

In a flare of her old pride Octavia twisted herself free.

"You cherished her in that storm, an' I—me—why—I might a-drowned!"

"Great King Agrippy, Tave!" he burst out in his big voice. "I had to keep a close guard on her! She was all gone to pieces like a bag o' sugar; she was scared pretty nigh out o' her senses."

"I was, too."

"No, you weren't, you plucky little soldier, you! You got twice th' grit o' most men. I counted on you like I would on another man to help me out. It cut me deep, though, to leave you to plow through it alone." A great color surged into his face, a mist filmed his hawk eyes. "Poor little girl, poor little honey! But I had to carry Emm'line in my arms biggest part o' th' way, an' she was all I could swing to."

He put her hands back about his neck.

"Now let's you an' me quit this foolishness, an' stop a-runnin' after strange gods, an' start back where we were."

"We'll be friends again, Andy?" timidly.

"Friends!" in tender scorn. "We never were friends, you little dearie, an' we ain't ever goin' to be. We've been lovers, you an' me, ever since you wore tyers an' me short pants; only we didn't sense how it was with us till other folks come 'long an' shook us up out o' our numbness. We're lovers. An' you know what we're goin' to be?" He drew her up into his arms, and laid his cheek against her soft hair. "We're goin' to be man an' wife."

Octavia freed herself almost with violence.

"You understand how 'tis with me, Andrew," she pleaded, in an extremity

of sincerity. "I confess I am a great sinner. You say it, too, 'long with me — 'You are a great sinner.'"

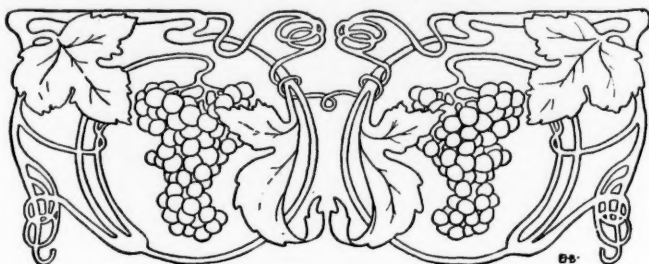
Her small, fair face was flushed with the pulse of her heart, her eyes still gleamed through tears.

Andrew smiled with a vast tenderness as on a dearly loved child.

"There, there, little dearie," he

soothed her. "You are a great sinner."

He drew her up again into his arms, and the girl felt his heart beating hot against hers, his kiss long and cherishing on her lips, and heard his voice breaking in a catch that was not a laugh, whispering: "But you're more'n hundred times better right now than what I'll ever be."



Vincennes

DEAR olden town, the hand is stilled
That drew thy picture fair,
But oft thy twilight hours are filled
With visions dim and rare.

Anon through round and minuet,
The creole girls return;
And in the misty darkness yet
The pinewood torches burn.

Once more come back the golden days,
Once more the Wabash flows;
Again the summer moonlight plays,
Above the summer rose.

And Alice Roussillon comes by
With Père Beret to save;
Shine stars within the midnight sky
Upon that good man's grave!

Sharp flash, and fire, and blinding smoke
In clouds long since are gone;
To-night no sound of warring stroke
May urge thy specters on.

But, gathered when the curfew calls,
From Indian hills or streams,
They dance before thy stockade walls,
Oh, town of happy dreams!

J. J. MEEHAN.



Danny Dean, Diver

By Wallace Irwin

ILLUSTRATED BY H.V. MAYER

ONE day as I walked for a quiet span
By the lights o' Biddeford Haw,
I met an elderly curio man
With a pipe in his toothless jaw.

"Oh, life ain't never the same to me,"
He mourned, and his air was blue,
"Since I was a diver under the sea
In the days o' sixty-two.

"There was never a vessel that sunk so deep
With 'er cargo o' silk and gold
But Danny Dean could reach 'er and glean
The treasure-trove from 'er hold.

"And I've salvaged trillions o' dollars cash
From the wreckage under the bay,
Which same I did for the humble quid
Of two and a half per day.

"In fifty-nine when the ship *Ensign*
Went down with 'er hold well weighed
With di'mond rings, and pearls, and things,
All bound for the Newport trade.

"Then my boss, McGee, he says to me:
'If divin' 's the trade ye love,
Dive into the wave and yon treasure save!
So into the wave I duv.

"Down, down I duv in the trench o' the sea,
Nine miles 'neath Biddeford Light,
Till last I seen in the water green
The wreck o' the *Ensign*, white.

"I scrambled bold right into 'er hold,
Where I seen by the phosphorous glare
A middle-size box all covered with locks,
Marked: 'Diamonds, Handle with Care.'

"I grabbed that box and started up,
When *whoosh*, from the sea beneath
A hammerhead shark swum out o' the dark,
And nabbed that box in 'is teeth!

"Straight in 'is teeth he held 'er tight
With a shake of his greedy coat.
My dooty was plain. With a yell o' pain
I clinched that shark by the throat.

"Down, down, down he sunk in the sea.
Me chokin' 'im somethin' rude.
'Twas plain to observe I was shakin' 'is nerve
By my desperate attitude.

"Down, down, down we sunk in the deep
When the truth flashed over me:
We had struck that hole through ocean's bowl
Which leads to the China Sea!

"But ye cannot discourage a man from Maine
Of doughty Puritan stock;
So I clutched tight holt of his jug-u-lar vein
Till that fish grew faint with the shock.

"And fust we knew we come right through
On the wave o' the China Sea,
Where that shark was got by a cannon shot
From the gunboat *Yippi-Yang-Yee*.

"Then I took them jools back to Biddeford
Pools,
And I give 'em to Boss McGee,
Who says: 'By crime, ye b'en gone a long
time!'
As suspicious he glared at me."

The deaf old mariner chewed his pipe,
And gazed far over the rail.
"Oh, what," I yelled, "is the moral spelled
By this stirring nautical tale?"

"Oh, it points to this moral, true and straight:
Great energy doesn't pay,
E'en though you work at the union rate
Of two and a half per day.

"For the boss he seen I was gone so long
That he cussed at my deep disgrace;
Then gave my job to Solomon Strong,
Who's workin' still in my place."





USELESS MYANNIC

By HOLMAN F. DAY

ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD



THE particular errand which took Cap'n Aaron Sproul to remote Custigo has nothing to do with this story except that it was an errand which took him to the big house of the Honorable Joash Tibb on Tibb's Hill.

A shipbuilding firm in which the cap'n had invested money required many ship knees in a hurry, and the Honorable Tibb controlled the ship-knee business of the whole north country.

Therefore, in the privacy of a little room which had been built upon the side of the big house, like "a barnacle on the garboard strake," as the cap'n commented, the business of the ship knees was discussed and settled.

The discussion had been punctuated with rather strange interruptions from outside.

From where he sat in the little office the cap'n could see the highway. To and fro in that highway a ragged man passed and repassed. He was wheeling a barrow in which a few old chairs were piled. It seemed to be rather aimless sort of business he was prosecuting, for he trudged back and forth before the house without displaying any desire to unload the chairs. Every little while he stopped in front of the office, set down his barrow, shook his fists, and shouted words which the cap'n did not understand.

Cap'n Sproul perceived that the Honorable Joash did understand.

His color deepened until his high cheek bones resembled purple knobs. He kept on talking about the prices and the quality of his ship knees, but his blue lips were drawn back in a sort of snarl, and his gray beard stuck out like the stiffened whiskers of an angry cat. Once in a while he jabbed a vicious oath into his conversation, and then growled apology when the cap'n blinked at him.

"If that fellow out there wants to peddle furniture to you, and I'm interfering in the dicker, go out and 'tend to him, and I'll wait," the cap'n ventured to suggest at last, for the Honorable Joash was arriving at a perfectly horrible condition of temper.

"One thing will be 'tended to at a time—and you first," stated Tibb. "If I wait a while I may be able to get mad enough to go out and kill him. I ought to have done that years ago. Now, in regard to those extra heavy knees—you damnation lying, thieving hyena!—no, no, Captain Sproul, I don't mean that for you. But that skunk out there is getting onto my nerves. I'm justified in killing him. It wouldn't be murder. He has kept at me like that for years. He watches for men to come here on business with me. He takes that chance to do what you see him doing."

"Yes, I see him doing it. But what is it he's doing?"

"I don't thank anybody, customer or visitor, to stick his nose into my pri-



"Who are you, you bad man, who have come to this town to stir brothers to wicked deeds?"

vate business," returned Tibb, with savage alacrity.

"If that is business," stated the cap'n, with a jab of his thumb in the direction of the clamorous person in the highway, "I reckon I don't want my nose in it. My nose might get chafed as bad as yours looks to be." He surveyed that organ on the face of the choleric Tibb.

It was such prompt and provocative retort that Tibb picked up the challenge, being in the mood to take all comers at that moment.

"Don't you go to getting into the class with my brother out there," he growled. "Men have sided in with him against me in this town, and have got hurt. The price of them ship knees is as I have quoted. You can take or leave at that price."

"I take," said Cap'n Sproul, rising. "Here is a certified check to bind the trade—full payment on delivery." He laid the slip of paper on the table, and banged his fist on it. "And if your general toughness is a fair sample of the toughness in them knees, we shall be perfectly satisfied."

"I don't relish your sneer."

"Then season it with peppersass to suit. I realize it ain't hot enough for your appetite. But since I have left the sea I have cooled off considerably on language, and have forgotten a good many words I used to have handy for general use. Good day!"

He stamped out of the little office, and Tibb stamped at his heels.

"Here he comes!" yelled the man in the road. "There is the steak-faced old robber! If you have come here to do business with him, Mr. Stranger, he will have the gizzard out of you before he gets done with you. He has stolen everything I had in this world. He did that to his own brother. What won't he do to anybody else? Look at the load on that wheelbarrow. That's what I managed to get out of my father's estate. Look at this house, and this land, and all he's got about him! That's what the robber got out of the estate."

"This seems to be a genteel and lovable family," muttered the cap'n. "But if I know anything about men that draggle-tail out there in the road is twice the man old turkey gobbler is."

"You have paraded that sculch past

here for the last time," roared the "turkey gobbler."

"I have done it for twenty years whenever I've felt like it," declared the man in the road, giving the cap'n a significant look. "I'll do it for twenty years more whenever I feel like it. If I was sure there was a hell after this life I wouldn't be wasting my time now—but there's a dispute among wise men, and I ain't taking any chances. I have shown you up to this town, you old Judas Iscariot! I'll take pains to show you up to every stranger that comes into this place, so that your reputation will travel to the ends of this wide land. You got an 'honorable' because you bribed and hired your way into the State senate. But I'll take that honorable away from you before I get done. He robbed me of my share in the estate, Mr. Stranger! Tell that to all folks outside. He broke up my whole life for me. I ain't never had a show on account of him. Tell that outside."

"Hold on! I'm mad enough at last. You have gone too far, Myannic Tibb. I'm going to settle this thing. You'll take what's coming to you. At last I'm mad enough!"

The elder brother choked out these sentences, apoplectic, stammering, raging, leaping up and down, clacking his fists together. Then he made a rush toward the highway, fairly running amuck.

Cap'n Sproul halted, and surveyed the scene with dispassionate interest. He reflected that if this were the climax of twenty years of bickering between brothers the conflict might be worth looking at.

"The older one has got more meat, and he is blind mad," he mused, as the honorable Joash fumbled frantically at the gate fastenings and cursed. "But I can see that the Slim Jim has nussed his grudge longest. It ought to be a moderately interesting set-to."

He went and leaned on the fence, and the tempestuous Joash plunged through the gate, and lunged at his brother.

"The gobbler doesn't know how to fight," growled the cap'n, with disgust.

The attacker was whirling his arms

windmill fashion, as green and gawky boys advance to combat—whirling his arms and making terrific threats. The ragged brother danced up to him, swept down the swinging arms, and buffeted Joash on either side of his head with resounding slaps. Then he danced backward briskly. Joash, with his eyes shut, and bellowing terrific oaths, was left alone in the middle of the road, beating his arms in the empty air.

When the ragged one danced backward he came near the fence where the cap'n was leaning.

"If you intend to make this thing a square dance I'll whistle, and you can jig it out," remarked the onlooker, with disgust. "But if it's going to be a fight go in and poke him a stiff-armed one. He needs it. It will teach him not to sass a man in a business deal."

The brother scented friendliness, and he ran out and dealt Joash a blow on the nose that sent him staggering to his gate.

"Keep up your mad!" shouted Cap'n Sproul, now entering thoroughly into the spirit of the occasion. "That crack ought to make you madder. Come back at him! If the two of you have been twenty years getting as far as this you may as well find out now who's top rooster."

The grudge and the knowledge that he had a sympathizer present seemed to be operating to the advantage of the younger brother. He frisked his heels, and drove a short-arm blow up under Joash's chin, and the flabby brother fell against the fence. One of his hands clutched a loose picket in his fall, and he ripped off the bit of wood. He came at his assailant in such demoniacal fashion, swishing his weapon, that the ragged man fled. For a moment he used his loaded barrow for a bulwark, and then he began to run around it, his brother at his heels.

"Here!" roared Cap'n Sproul. "Drop that picket! I'm a disinterested party, and I'll see fair play. Clubs don't go! Mix it with your fists man fashion. I'll give you a fair decision." He ran out through the gate. "Drop that picket!"

The elder brother merely cursed

more loudly, and kept on in the race around the barrow. Cap'n Sproul stuck out his foot, and tripped him deftly, and he went sprawling, his cudgel flying from his grasp.

"It had to be done," the cap'n shouted, drowning out the profane and frantic billingsgate of the fallen man. "You may be the Honorable Joash Tibb, but I never stood by yet and saw a fight made anything but fair and stand-up, and I don't propose to see dirt done now so long as I have my faculties. And if that sentiment doesn't suit, I'll fight you myself."

He went along, and shook admonitory finger under Joash's nose.

"I don't belong in this, eh? Well, you kindly take notice that I am running it—as a fair and disinterested man. You two have got to a point where only a fight will clear the air. Now, get up and fight man fashion."

At that moment a woman's voice startled the cap'n. She had come hurrying to the scene from a tidy cottage, which stood at a little distance from the big house. She was a woman of middle age, and was as tidy as the cottage from which she had come. It was plain that she had overheard a portion of the cap'n's bellicose counsel.

"Who are you, you bad man, who have come to this town to stir brothers to wicked deeds?"

She had a sweet face, though sorrow and some anger now disturbed its placid lines. Cap'n Sproul was impressed by that countenance, and whipped off his hat.

"You have urged brothers to fight in the open road, and make a shameful spectacle of themselves."

"I shall have to contradict you, marm. My name is Sproul, and I never rubbed a bulldog's ears yet just for the sake of seeing him fight. This row started without any help of mine. You must know these critters better than I do." A pink flush stole into her cheek. "You may know what the grudge is all about. I don't. I have just happened onto the side lines by accident. But, being here, I proposed to see the thing done in a shipshape and seamanlike manner." He

whirled and slapped the cursing mouth of the elder brother. "Batten that hatch, you old hoss mack'rel! There's a lady present. It only amounts to this, marm: they seemed to be ready to balance accounts after the books between 'em had been open for twenty years, as near as I could figger from what little has been dropped. The slim one was operating scientifically and man fashion. The hefty one was starting to mix it up with a picket, and as a fair man I couldn't stand for it. You seem to be a neighbor. If you are you know I never started this fuss."

The flush in her cheeks deepened. She turned away from the cap'n. She evidently understood conditions between the Tibb brothers better than he.

"Myannic, pick up your barrow and go home. I am ashamed of you. How could you do this wicked thing, after all the years I have talked to you?"

"I reckon it was in me, and had to come out. There wasn't anything else I could do when he came at me just now."

"But you came here and provoked him. You have come here many times. I have told you to stay away."

"Provoked him!" cried the younger brother, almost wailing his words. "And how about him provoking me by robbing me of what my father and mother planned to have me enjoy? You know how different things would have been for me if he had let me have what was my own. He has spoiled my life—yes, he has spoiled yours, too."

"Hush!" she said, casting a glance of alarm at the stranger on the scene.

"I can't hush all my life, Alfaretta. I'm too much stirred up to hush. It's got to come out. I wanted you, and you wanted me in the years back. He wanted you, and made a pauper of me to get me out of the way. Yes, I know I'm talking in front of this man! But I'll bet he is a good man. He stood up for me. He was kind to me. He saw through that old hell hound."

He pointed quivering finger at the Honorable Joash, who had secured the picket, and was beating the dust from his trousers, growling venomously.

"I wish you would pass on your way, sir," the woman informed the cap'n. "This poor man is excited, and is saying things which strangers should not hear."

"I want a friend—I want advice from a man who knows something—and there ain't a man in this town who has ever dared to stand up against old Ten-percent Tibb, there," clamored the younger brother. "I reckon the Lord has sent this man along here to-day when this thing came to a head."

"I never took out a regular license allowing me to stick my nose into other folks' business," stated Cap'n Sproul. "But I license myself to do it on special occasions. It looks to me, marm, as though a referee was needed here. It certainly needed one when the fight was on—or else there would have been a coroner's job here. What do I understand your name is?" he asked his new client.

"Myannic Tibb—brother of that disgrace to the human race." Once more the quivering finger indicated the chafing Joash.

"Your father ought to have given you two-thirds of the estate to square up for pasting that name onto you," commented the cap'n dryly. "If you didn't get what's coming to you, I reckon it's a matter that better be looked into. Where's your house?"

"Down under that hill—that little hut—and he lives here in the big house, the thief!"

"I protest against a stranger interfering!" cried the woman. "It's a delicate matter, sir. I am concerned. I do not want my precious secrets dragged out to be sneered at. Myannic, you have obeyed me in the past in this mat-



He tightened his clutch on his ears.

ter. You have kept your own counsel. Don't expose our affairs. I not only advise—I command!"

"A woman's advice is generally good; and a good part of the time she is entitled to the quarter-deck when it comes to giving off orders, marm," stated the cap'n, touching his hat. "You can't get me to go back on the women. But from the general looks of things here, you have been advising this poor cuss to hump up his back and take the orts in this brotherly deal. Now, ain't that so?"

"I don't understand that kind of language, sir," she returned, with dignity. "But advice to be patient in adversity, and to trust in the right prevailing in the end is my idea of good counsel."

"That's a fine theory when it is touched up with a little practice, marm. Right will almost always get there finally, if you use the gad enough. I've been quite a hand in my life to use suasion, both moral and the other kind. I'm going to use my special license, and have a look into this thing. It seems

to need a man, seeing that woman's advice hasn't spread sail enough to get headway on the matter."

"Don't you stick your nose into my business," shouted the Honorable Josiah, advancing and menacing the cap'n with his picket. "I'll twist it off your face if you do."

"I've always run of an idea that this nose is bolted on pretty solid," said the cap'n, stroking the threatened member. "I'm perfectly willing to let you take a tug at it now if you feel like testing it."

But the Honorable Tibb halted when he had looked into the cap'n's eyes, and, when the mediator stepped toward him, offering the nose to his grasp, Tibb retreated to his own side of the fence.

"It's plain to be seen, marm, that a man has been needed in this matter to call a bluff," remarked Cap'n Sproul. "I'm in this thing sudden and unexpected, as the cat said when she tried to walk across the brook on floating sawdust, but I'm going to stay in it till I see bottom."

With his customary decisive air in affairs where he had assumed command, he ordered Myannic to pick up the handles of his barrow, and lead the way to the hut under the hill. The woman followed, protesting, entreating the younger brother to keep their affairs from the ears of this stranger; and from the gate of her cottage sent after them an indignant ultimatum to the effect that if Myannic disobeyed her commands she would never speak to him again. It was delivered with so much force that the poor fellow halted and dropped his barrow.

"It ain't any use," he wailed. "I'm frozen into trouble forever. *He* rammed me into it, and *she* won't let me kick my way out. I can't afford to lose the only friend I love in the wide world, mister. You go on about your business. I ought to have realized that nothing can be done for me by anybody."

"Pick up that wheelbarrow," ordered the cap'n, in his best shipmaster's tones. And when the cowering Myannic had obeyed that yelp of command, the cap'n drove him down the hill on the dogtrot

with the flat of a broad hand against Myannic's sun-tanned coat.

Poverty and shiftlessness marked the interior of the little house.

"I haven't had any courage," confessed the owner, noting the cap'n's scowl as he examined the interior. "He got my money away from me by hook and crook. I've just been waiting for right to prevail. She advised me to be patient, and keep away from lawyers, and stay out of a fight with him. Our private affairs would all have to come out in court, she said. It would shame us to death, she said."

"Seems to have said a good deal in the way of triggering your business. What's her especial license?"

But it was plain that the obsession of that ultimatum was overwhelming Myannic at that moment. He stammered, and grew red, and changed the subject:

"I'm a failure! I don't amount to anything, I haven't courage to start out and make anything of myself, mister. That fiddle hanging up there on the wall is full of tunes. I've tried and I've tried, and I can't get 'em out. My head is full of ideas, too, but I can't get 'em out—I can't get 'em out. What can a man like me do, working days' works in a town like this—where every man works for himself? If I had had my money to do with I could have developed some of my ideas. But I've waited—I have tried to coax him, to shame him—and a little while ago I was ready to kill him. He's a——"

"I shouldn't wonder a mite if he is," broke in the cap'n, with a brisk interruption. "He looks and talks like it. But I ain't here to listen to a lecture on that point. Look-a-here—what did you say that name of yours is?"

"Myannic."

"I'm going to call you 'Tom.' I don't feel sensible saying that other word. Now, Tom, you listen to me. That woman up there on the hill loves you. Saw it in her eye. You are poor and shiftless, so far as I can see, but that woman loves you, and has for a good many years. Women are queer critters, Tom. They just turn right around and

love the last man you'd expect 'em to love. That's the way with women."

The ragged man's face had grown very red.

"I can see that you love her, too. I've got a great eye for their kind of things, Tom. Now, why is it you and her have dragged along like this, and haven't ever got married?"

"I tell you what *she* told you—you haven't any right to pry into our private business. I lost my head up there for a little while. I have stood a lot in this life, and human nature broke out in me. But I won't gossip about her with a total stranger. No, sir!"

"Just let me inform you that I'm no stranger, Tom. I've taken up this case because I saw that somebody besides a woman was needed in it. You had an illustration of what I mean only a little spell ago. When he took after you with a picket a woman would have simply begged and implored. I tripped him. That brother of yours needs to be tripped in your other business, Tom. Now, you dropped something when you was excited that led me to believe that your brother wanted that woman once."

"He wants her now, but she won't have him!" blurted Myannic, stung to this confession. "He always wanted her, and when she wouldn't have him, and he saw that she thought more of me, he set out and robbed me and ruined me—and she is afraid it will all come out how we have loved each other and waited, if I go into the law about it."

"And that's woman again," stated the cap'n. "When she has nussed and tended a love affair for a long time she marks 'Private' on the door, and stands up with her arms spread across it, and you've got to tromple her underfoot to get at it. That's the woman of it! Suffering ain't anything to her so long as she can keep all outsiders from tracking through that little private parlor where she has nussed and tended love. So she wouldn't marry you so long as you stayed poor, and she wouldn't let you whale in and raise merry hob and get what belonged to you for fear the neighbors would sit and snicker about your love affair?"

The flush suffused Myannic's tanned face more deeply.

"You mustn't talk about Alfaretta Ruggles that way," he protested warmly. He beat his hand on his breast. "She has been willing to marry me just as I am. She says she has enough money for both of us. She says that she will back me in my ideas, so that I won't have to have the nickname all through this town of 'Useless Myannic.' That's what they call me. 'I understand you, Myannic,' she tells me. But I can't take her money, mister; I can't be married to her the way I am. I'd be worse than useless if I did that. She says she can't forgive me if I go to law with my brother, and stir this thing up, and have our troubles all spread out before the people. She thinks I ought to show more regard for her than that—she says if I'll come to her we'll be all right—and nobody's business! But I can't do it. I say, it has always been hell for me—it always will be. I haven't taken a good firm grip on life the way I ought to. I've been waiting. I've been fooling along. I've been hoping and whining, instead of doing—and I see it all when it's too late. Just 'Useless Myannic'—that name fits me."

Cap'n Sproul stood and listened to that outburst with pursed lips and wrinkled brows. He surveyed the unfortunate man with judicious disfavor.

"Being trained a sailor, where you have to think quick, grab quick, hold on hard, and never quit till the job has been finished, I feel called on to remark that your nickname of Useless seems to fit you pretty snug, Tom," he stated, with severity. "That's too good a woman to be kept on tenterhooks all the years. I guess I can get into this thing quicker by talking with her than by fooling away any more time buzzing you."

The man drew himself up.

"See here, mister, I have got some pride and some feelings, even if it may not seem that way to you. Up there in the road, as I told you, I lost my head—I talked like a child. I don't want you mixing into this thing. She doesn't want you in it, either. And I'm think-



Miss Ruggles was at her gate, and was plainly stifling much inward perturbation.

ing of her first. You'll have to march on about your own business. I insist on it."

"The only time you seem to be real set in your notions is when you are operating for your own hurt," retorted the cap'n. "If you'd show as much spirit in getting at your brother in the right way as you are showing to me now you would have got along better in this world."

"I just showed spirit in dealing with him," said the younger brother. "That ought to show you that I am not a man who can be trifled with safely."

"Spirit!" sneered the cap'n. "I found you up there yah-yahing at him from the road, and whelting him 'side of the face. You don't think you are going to get your money out of him by flailing it out the same as you would thrash beans, do you?"

"That same spirit can be used again if a man mixes into my affairs when I have asked him to keep hands off for the sake of a woman," insisted Myan-nic.

"Meaning that you think you can cuff my ears and get away with it? Tom, a

man who has been up against it the way you have been needs to be humored, ought to be coddled just a little. I'm willing to trot you on my knee to a certain extent—but I'd advise you not to take any special liberties with a man who is trying to pull you out of a hole."

"I say again, I want you to pass on, and let my business rest as it is."

"I'm a peculiar man, Tom. Going to sea for so many years has sharpened up a lot of my finer sensibilities. For instance, having been an old bach for so long, not wanting to make a good woman miserable by her waiting and worrying while I was sloshing from Hue to Hackenny, I got romantic notions into me of what was due to woman; and now that I am married happy I can't get those notions out. I couldn't go out of this town and know that I had left a good woman behind me, sorrowing and forlorn all for no fault of hers. She is being ground between the upper and the lower millstone. It just naturally looks as though it was up to me to pry that upper one off—meaning your brother Joash."

"You shall not interfere and make scandal for us all."

"As I said, a lot of my finer sensibilities—those in relation to sorrowing women—were sharpened up when I was away at sea. But lots of other sensibilities were dulled by a sailor's life. It had to happen that way. What you say about my meddling in this case don't have the least effect on me. I'm dulled to that extent! But my other sensibilities are so sharp that if I went away and left that woman sorrowing like she is I couldn't sleep nights; I couldn't relish vittles; I should be moping around while I pondered on the case—and though I sympathize with you, Tom, I ain't willing to sacrifice all my peace of mind for your sake. It's too much to ask of me. If I should go home and be thinking of you, and of your case and that woman who has been loving you and waiting all the years, and should be blue and mope around my house and make my own wife unhappy—it would be bad business. I can't afford to take any chances."

Myannic stared helplessly, yet furiously, at this leech of a Samaritan.

"You talk as though you have a right to pick up my business and run it for the sake of your own peace of mind, as you call it."

"It was your own, original proposition. You said you needed help—you asked me to grab in."

"But now I say I don't want you to do it. I order you to mind your own affairs."

"First orders was promptly attended to by me, and I started on the case. I haven't got any use for a whiffle-minded man who is always changing his mind. I don't change my mind. If you are of the whiffle-headed sort, I shall simply put you to one side, and go right ahead and straighten this thing out."

"Oh, my Gawd!" wailed Myannic. "I am so useless, so weak, so despised by men that I can't even run my own little business."

"You can help a lot, Tom," returned the cap'n serenely. "Now, sit right down, and tell me all the facts and the details about how old Hornbeam up

there on the hill hornswoggled you out of your share of the estate."

"I'll tell you nothing whatever about it!" shrieked Myannic. "I know how it all will turn out. The first question in court will be about how the trouble started, and then poor Alfaretta will be shamed by me, and she will never speak to me again—and there are some things in this world that are better than money. No, I'll not tell you anything. Don't you insult me any further."

The cap'n fingered his nose, and looked Myannic up and down.

"For me to quit now would be like a father backing down on giving a dose of castor oil because the baby squealed and kicked," he mused.

After he had pondered a moment he sat down at a battered table, and pushed back the litter until he had made a space on which he could write. For paper he used one of the blank sheets of a ship-knee contract. He wrote slowly, occasionally pausing to study the smoky ceiling with the air of one who was searching for phrases to use in an epic. When he had finished he read the thing over to himself, and grunted his satisfaction.

He rose, clutched Myannic by the shoulder, and pushed him down in the chair. He pinned the paper to the table with the end of his stubby forefinger.

"You sign that," he directed.

"Signing papers brought all my trouble onto me. I won't sign any more."

"This is another kind of a paper. I'm not here to cheat you. I'm here to help you. Sign that paper."

"I'll never do it!"

"I nigh mellered in the skull of a drowning man once before I could make him stop kicking—and then I rescued him, and he was everlastingly grateful—and kissed my hand before his head had got healed up. History may repeat itself. You are drowning—so far as living and loving and having go! I happen along. I've jumped in to bring you ashore. You sign that paper!"

Myannic rose and retreated to the far side of the little room.

"No!" he squalled, shrinking before the masterful glare in the cap'n's eyes.



Then he got up and ran again until he had disappeared in the direction of the big house on the hill.

The cap'n left the table, and went and stood before his client, hands on his hips.

"Look here, you! I have seen men something like you before, since I have come ashore from the sea. But I have never seen one who needed straightening out worse. It takes the back lots to breed your kind. You said you had a few good ideas you would have worked out if you had money to back you. Before I start in on your case in earnest, and while you can still talk sense, you tell me one idea of yours you think is worth something."

The eyes were masterful, the air

was dominating, the quarter-deck tone was irresistible.

"You say you have followed the sea," quavered Myannic. "Well, right up there on the wall you see that instrument. It is a combined thermometer, barometer, humidity gauge, and I have tested it for seven years, and have kept my record of weather predictions. I have compared them daily with the reports from the United States bureau, and have been right twice as often as the Washington folks. I have worked out a general weather theory of observations to go with my instrument. I have written and written to Washington and to big men, but I get no attention. There! That is one of my ideas."

The captain squinted at the instrument for some moments.

"I'm going to take your word for it that it is a good thing, Tom," he stated at last. "You seem to be telling the truth. Well, then, you are worth helping. The woman who has been waiting for you is worth helping. I'm going to help. You sit down and sign that paper."

"No!" declared the man doggedly.

Then Cap'n Sproul rose to the occasion, having repressed himself longer than was his wont.

"You are looking at me—you are talking to me, Tom, as though you suspected I'm a crook here to get a note out of you. Now, my name is Cap'n

Aaron Sproul, of Scotaze. I was a master mariner for thirty years, I am a trustee of the Cuxabexis County Savings Bank. I have been high sheriff of that county. A note from you wouldn't be worth a fog bank on the south exposure in Gehenna. There's just one thing that can be made worth something by having your name signed to it. That's that dockyment I have just drawn up. Your affairs need looking into. You are a baby in business, and your good woman on the hill is a saint—and a baby and a saint ain't shod sharp enough to do business with Joash Tibb. That there on the table is a power of attorney running to me. You sit down and sign it."

"It means uproar in the courts—scandal, gossip, and she has forbidden me to act in that way. I won't sign it."

Cap'n Sproul seized Myannic by his thin elbows, and ran him to the table, tripped him, and held him in the chair. The handles by which he held him there were Myannic's hot ears.

"You sign that paper. When it comes to matters of their own good, some men in this world can be shown, some can be convinced, some can be coaxed, and a few have to be kicked. Tom, I have taken up your case because I consider it worth taking up." He tightened his clutch on the ears. "I'll go to work and handle the love part of this affair as though it was whipped frosting on an angel cake. But I'll jar the business part down in front of your brother Joash with a whelt that will bounce him off'n his perch. Sign that paper with the pen—or I'll ram you down by the ears, swab ink on the end of your nose, and make you sign that way. I mean business, and I'm in a hurry."

That masterful man dominating him—that ferocious assumption of authority—that first experience with one who scoffed at the usual amenities governing the intercourse of men, prevailed even over Myannic's determination to obey the woman he loved. He signed.

Cap'n Sproul tucked the folded paper into his breast pocket.

"And now I'm going to say good day to you, Tom. You don't know enough

about business to make it worth my while to sit here and talk with you. I'm going to make a trip to the shire town of this county, and look up the records of transfers in the Tibb family, and mouse for general items of interest. I'll let you know that much of my plans, seeing that you are an interested party. Having been sheriff of a county, I understand how to hunt records and dig out kernels from legal nuts."

He pumphandled the gasping Myannic, and hastened away. His route took him back past the home of Miss Ruggles, and past the big house on the hill.

Miss Ruggles was at her gate, and was plainly stifling much inward perturbation when she nerved herself to speak to him.

Her purpose was well understood by the cap'n.

"That woman wants to make me promise to keep out of this business," he muttered. "Bein' naturally polite with womenfolks, she might trip me into promising if I hang up."

So he doffed his hat, and hurried past, flinging this over his shoulder:

"Whatever the chap under the hill tells you, marm, you needn't worry one mite. It will all come out straight, if I find that anything is crooked. Don't be scared at what he tells you, for he doesn't understand my ways of doing business."

The Honorable Joash Tibb was at his gate, also. His mien was so menacing and his air of having something important to say was so pronounced that Cap'n Sproul halted, faced the man, and set his elbows on his hips.

"Say it," he advised.

"I propose to cancel that ship-knee contract."

"Go ahead! That will add another lawsuit to one I'm getting ready to bring." He drew two papers from his pocket. He shook them above his head. "A broken contract and a broken brother! I'm going to have some fun with you, Honor'ble Tibb!"

On his way to the village Myannic Tibb heard a queer sound on the other side of a hedge fence. It was a sound

like the twanging of innumerable little harps. Myannic was in a hurry, for he was impressed with the idea that on this day he would receive some word from that strange man who had held him by the ears three days before and had made him sign a paper. But Myannic's haste in the direction of the post office was modified by that queer sound on the other side of the fence. He peered through a hole in the hedge. It was as he had surmised. A fugitive colony of bees were swarming. The only bee keeper in town was Joash Tibb, of Tibb's Hill. His hives contained rare varieties, which were said to be worth much money.

Myannic glanced about him. A rusty and battered tin pail was hung on a post near a wayside spring near at hand. That pail suggested possibilities.

Myannic ran and secured the pail, and burst through the hedge, pounding on the tin with a bit of stick. The swarm had not settled definitely on the apple-tree limb, but the noise dizzied and confounded the queen, and soon the bees began to huddle into a cohesive mass. They had swarmed.

Myannic Tibb was a man who had traveled the fields and woods all his life, and understood all the ways of bird and beast and insect. Calmly he approached the mass of bees, and began to stroke them into the pail. When all were secured he clapped the mouth of the pail against his breast, and started away for the village.

"The old thief!" he muttered. "He stole everything from me. Now I have something of his, even if it is only a runaway swarm of bees. I will sell them to the postmaster."

When the captor of the bees came around the corner of the street in sight of the post office he saw his brother on the steps, waiting for the mail. He strode on, hugging the pail to his breast. He looked again. There was a man with his brother. He peered. It was the masterful man who had taken that power of attorney from him. It was plain that he had just arrived on the train, for he held a little valise in one hand. The forefinger of the other hand

was wagging under the nose of the Honorable Joash Tibb in monitory style.

"There's the man you have robbed," cried Cap'n Sproul, when Myannic approached. "I know how to hunt over records, and I can find the holes in a skimmer. I've got you dead to rights, Tibb. I hold power of attorney for your brother. I'll give you forty-eight hours, because there are private reasons why we don't relish a trial. But if you haven't handed over in forty-eight hours I start matters with an indictment for embezzlement—and I've got the evidence."

But the Honorable Joash Tibb was in belligerent mood.

"You're a blackmailer, and he is a fool!" he informed the cap'n wrathfully. "You start in slandering me, and I'll have *you* in jail, and *him* in the insane asylum. You don't know what you are talking about. That for you and your records!"

He snapped his finger under the cap'n's nose. He turned his back on the man he had taunted.

He spied the pail that was hugged against Myannic's breast.

"I suppose you have stolen something out of my garden as usual when you came past," he sneered. "I have been missing things. You and this friend of yours are evidently in a conspiracy to steal all I own. What have you got in that pail? That pail is mine. It has been hanging on a pole by the spring."

"You think I have something that belongs to you, do you?" asked Myannic, with baleful note in his voice.

"I'm sure of it. You're a natural thief. Give me that pail."

"When a man claims his own property he can have it, as far as I'm concerned," replied the younger brother.

He hurled the pail and its contents in the face of the elder brother, who came at him, snapping his demanding finger.

The Honorable Joash was hot and perspiring after his heated talk with Cap'n Sproul. Angry bees make prey of the man who is perspiring. The entire swarm made for this offensive individual.

Joash yelled one wild oath, and—
knowing bees—turned and fled.

A banner of bees followed him. Once or twice he fell and rolled in the highway dust, yelling his agony. Then he got up and ran again until he had disappeared in the direction of the big house on the hill. By the manner in which he leaped, and beat with wind-mill arms, and shouted imprecations, it was plain that the bees were following.

"Was them his bees?" asked Cap'n Sproul, when the tumult and the shouting had died away.

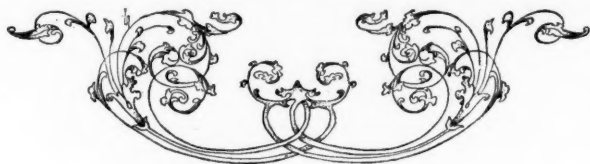
"Yes," said Myannic.

"I thought they must be. He was in such a hurry to get home with them when he had got his property back. I don't think I ever saw a man more avaricious. Rushing home like that just to carry a swarm of bees back, and

breaking up a business conversation with me, shows a pretty mean disposition. I reckon I'll follow along, and see how much damage has been done," added the cap'n, smacking his lips in anticipatory fashion.

He departed on the trail of the zealous bee retriever.

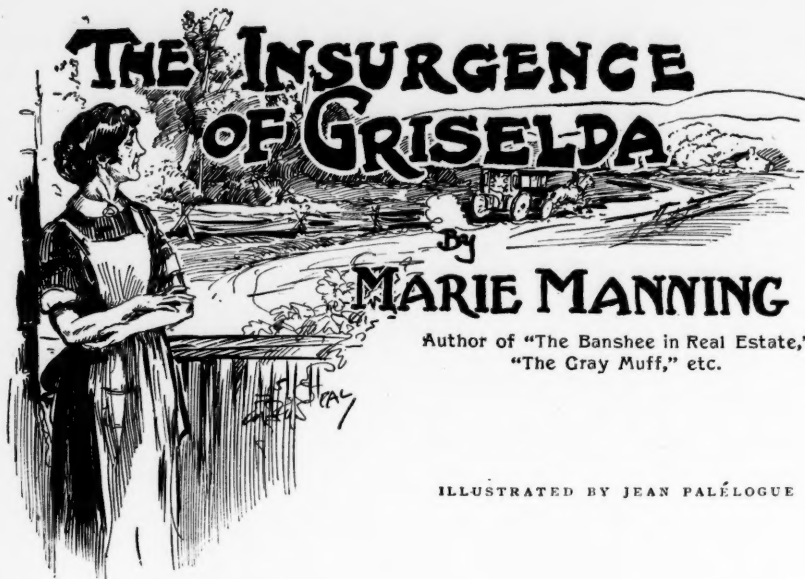
"I reckon that them bees stung the fighting streak out of him," Cap'n Sproul informed Myannic the next day. "He could only see out of one eye, but he could see enough with that one to understand that I meant business. He's going to settle. We'll meet at his house to-night, for I've got to be traveling. My pay? Well, send me a piece of the wedding cake. I'm strong on happy dreams—and I always dream happy things when I've got a piece of wedding cake under the pillow."



A Basement Flower Shop

NOT to be housed in such unworthy space,
Or spend their glory on a world so dim,
These rich pink masses foam above the place,
Mantle the stair and reach the pavement rim.
White froth of blossom, fair
As is the crimson's flare,
Eddies among the waves of maidenhair.
The very jars, new come
From some stained potter thumb,
A certain charm in their warm earth tint wear.
Now for a nymph amid
The bloom, or faun half hid,
Such as on old Olympus frisked and slid!
Alack, they come no more,
So near does traffic roar
To Arcady! This lad, though, near the door,
The wood's soul yet may bear
Into the town day's care,
When, damping violets some girl shall wear,
Their dainty breath may steal
Upon him, till he feel
Through their blue eyes the forest make appeal!

JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.



Author of "The Banshee in Real Estate,"
"The Gray Muff," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY JEAN PALÉOLOGUE

ALL that long September day—afterward it became the especial point of time from which she dated everything—Ellen Haskell was conscious of a strange impersonal force that persisted in taking notes relative to those persons whom she had always designated as her "nearest and dearest."

This mischievous spirit had begun its impertinent cross-questioning at five o'clock that morning, when she was wondering if she could part her hair straight without lighting the lamp and possibly disturbing Abel, who always depended on his morning nap. And the imp had put the question, why should Abel depend on his morning nap any more than she? Dutifully she answered, as she had these ten years, that Abel "wasn't strong." But the imp merely grinned its reply, and Ellen proceeded with her work.

She filled the wood box, as Lemuel, her son, had gone fishing, she put the milk through the "separator," and cooked breakfast for the "boarders," recalling each eccentricity of appetite

—those who would die if they didn't have doughnuts with their coffee, and those who would die if they did. Their varying preferences for shredded, puffed, toasted, and flaked breakfast foods, all these things she remembered with a sort of trained animal patience that had given her such small successes in life as she could count as her own.

After breakfast her daughter came into the kitchen to make the dessert. The girl wore a blue cotton frock defended from the impending pudding by a bit of ribboned frill, known as a "Welsh rabbit apron." The imp called Ellen's attention to this inconsequent bit of frippery, and for the first time it seemed funny. The mother had always felt sorry for Hilda, with her bleached, patient smile, her limp figure, and her inability "to take right hold" of anything; but now the girl seemed to exhibit certain unintentionally humorous traits that her mother saw for the first time.

Hilda was an ornamental rather than a structural member of the family. She wanted to go to Boston and have a

studio, her qualification for such an enterprise being that she had spent two years in an arts and crafts summer school, and that she "did" jewelry. At first the family had expected great things from the jewelry—it was understood that its queerness constituted its value—but as time went on and the boarders only fingered it, and wondered if they could learn to make it, too, the family had gradually lost faith in the black arts of Hilda.

"I'm glad the last of 'em are going to-day," the girl said, separating the whites and yolks of the eggs. "It's such a nuisance having 'em everywhere—in your room, at your table, swarming over the porch, and—everywhere you want to go and breathe there's a boarder stuck!"

"Now, I'm real sorry the boarder season is over; I find 'em entertainin'. And when they begin about traveling in Europe I feel's if I'd been there."

"I mean to see Europe for myself some day." And Hilda whipped the whites of the eggs viciously. She spread the froth over the pudding, and snapped the oven door. "Just watch this, if you please, mother. I'm going to my metal work. I won't be back to dinner. And say good-by to the boarders for me."

What was the matter with her? What was the matter with everything? In her own youth Ellen would never have felt that she could leave her mother with all the work to do. And the imp whispered "Selfishness! Selfishness!" And Mrs. Haskell went about making the most of one pair of hands. The carriages that were to take the summer people on their long drive to the station were already struggling and creaking up the hill. For the first time she envied these city people their ability to change, to go to new places when there was no peace left in the old.

She was almost sixty years of age, and she had never been fifty miles from this neighborhood in her life. There had been so many things she wanted to do all these long years of housekeeping, boarder taking, rag-carpet weaving that had to be kept up relentlessly because the mortgage ate it all; but now the loan had been paid, and it was she who

had performed the miracle. She, and that strange, troublesome alien, the boarder, with his eccentricities of palate that included olive oil, uncooked breakfast foods, and unsalted butter, but he had been worth while, after all; not only had he paid the mortgage, but he had left a comfortable little nest egg in the bank.

When the "boarders" came to say "Good-by," nearly all of them unconsciously corroborated the observations of the imp with some such remark as: "Now, Mrs. Haskell, do take more care of yourself;" or "You ought to have some one to help you; the work of this house is too much." She had to struggle with her tears as she wished them pleasant journeys, and handed them the lunches that were always part of her farewell ceremony, and at last they were gone. She walked to the kitchen door, and breathed deeply of the spicy fragrance of early autumn.

How seldom she had gone beyond that door. It framed her life, even as it now framed her work-gnarled figure. And yet, the others came and went, only she had been the foolish fly unable to find its way out of the open bottle. She could not meet her family, feeling like this, full of bitterness and revolt; she must pull herself together. Perhaps she would go and sit with her old neighbor, Mrs. Price, or maybe Cousin Mary Forbes, somewhere out of the kitchen that had suddenly grown a prison. She scribbled a note to her daughter on the memorandum pad that hung over the washbasin, saying now that the boarders had gone she would go and pay a little visit, and not to look for her till she came. Then she walked through the kitchen door that had marked the boundary of her life so long, walked through it, without a single backward glance.

The delicious green twilight of the woods laid soothing hands on her, the pine needles were fragrant under foot, somewhere in the boughs a bird sang a note of welcome. She made her way along the old post road that in pre-Revolutionary days had been the great thoroughfare between the New England



"Now, I'm real sorry the boarder season is over; I find 'em entertainin'."

hill country and Albany; but now it was wild and overgrown with blackberry vines and ground pine, and the timber on either side was thick and untouched. Intent on her own thoughts, she wandered for an hour or more before noticing that traces of the old road had been completely obliterated by the encroachment of the woods; but the peace of the green twilight was grateful, and she kept on and on, till she realized in sudden panic that she was lost.

No trace of road was visible, and she wandered aimlessly, tracing and retracing her steps. Old trees had fallen, young timber had sprung up, vines caught and held her back with elfin perversity, and she found herself constantly coming back to the same landmark—the charred trunk of a tree. She was terrified by her plight; people had been lost in these woods before, and had not come out again.

While she considered, unconsciously her hand slipped into her pocket, and

closed over the roll of bills that one of the summer people had paid her that afternoon. There were sixty-two dollars in the roll, and all Ellen's New England thrift rose up in fighting horror of dying with so stupendous a sum on her. It might be weeks before they found her body, and the rain might spoil the money. The thought nerved her to frantic energies; it should never be said of her that she was so shiftless as to wander off with sixty-two dollars of boarder money in her pocket, and die in the woods! What would folks think of her? She who had always been so thrifty, and made every cent do the work of two.

Two hours later a torn and disheveled figure fought its way out of the woods, and lay down in the grass-grown road. The road was strange to her, so was the shell of a deserted house. The utter giving up to fatigue was delicious after the long battle with the woods. Everything else was forgotten

in the refreshment that came with lying relaxed on the soft grass. The wind in the pine trees lulled her, and then a delightful nothingness, and she fell asleep.

"Well, now, ain't this scandalous! A woman—an old gray-haired woman—lying drunk in the road, and us to nearly run over her! And if we'd a-killed her it wouldn't 'a' been our faults—would it, Daisy?"

The old white horse threw up its head in assent, stopped—and Ellen scrambled to her feet with apologies sober enough to convince the most skeptical of mistake.

"Then you get right in, if you've been lost for hours in the woods; and after you've had a good cup o' tea then we can talk about getting you home."

Ellen could not see the face of her deliverer in the darkness, but she was glad to climb into the surrey without further formality. During the drive the lady, who was bulky enough to fill the two front seats of the vehicle, addressed her conversation impartially to Ellen and the old horse, that finally stopped at a white house with green blinds. Its long, rambling aspect was vaguely familiar, and yet it was some moments before Ellen recognized in the well-kept dwelling and orderly shrubbery the abandoned farm of her great-uncle, Elijah Simmons.

The big room, with the low ceiling and the huge fireplace, made her think of her grandmother's Canton tea set. The floor was covered with a blue-and-white rag carpet, the doors curtained with old hand-woven spreads of the same shades, the furniture of the straight-backed type that Ellen had not seen since her early girlhood.

"My, who would 'a' thought you could 'av' turned out such a handsome parlor on these—" Ellen checked herself from what would have been, to her, the disrespectful designation of "old things."

"Now, dearie, there ain't a mite o' credit coming to me from all this. It's my daughter's taste, and to tell the truth I like chairs that have more lap to 'em. Give me what my daughter calls 'a vul-

gar chair' for solid comfort every time."

Mrs. Haskell felt that she ought to justify herself socially, and not let this stranger take her for the sort of person who would tramp the country and sleep by the roadside.

"This used to be my great-uncle's house; he built it for his fourth wife, Maria Wheeler. The first three all died in the old house, and Aunt Maria allowed she'd wear better if she started in with everything new and convenient. It was the first house hereabouts to have a well under the shed."

Thus settling her connection with the great Simmons' family, Ellen waited for her hostess to return ancestral fire.

The fat lady wasted no time on claims to an imposing lineage, but proceeded to identify such portions of her family tree as were still above ground. These consisted of a son and daughter—the former a prosperous shoe manufacturer in Brockton, a comfort of a son, who cared nothing for the straight and narrow in chairs, a daughter who taught school in Bridgeport, and entertained a flagrant passion for old furniture. Both were at present away from home, and the family name of all was Tucker.

Ellen then stated her present claims to distinction in: "My daughter is very much interested in the 'arts and crafts' movement."

The fat lady heaved a sigh of such power that it started the rocking-chair in which she was sitting.

"Lord, so's mine; it does beat all, the things it takes, nowadays, to make a girl contented with a good home. When I was young I helped round the house, and I was happy if I had a best dress and time to go to a church festival—but now! What art 'n' craft does your daughter do?"

"Metal work; her jewelry is that old-timey looking it might 'a' come right out of the ark."

"Mine sets no store by jewelry—weavin' an' pottery about fills her time after school—what's left she spends on New Thought."

"'New Thought?'" queried her visitor. "Hilda's not taken to that yet."

"Then I guess she's never had the nervous prostration," said the fat lady, with the air of regarding the other girl as a mere neophyte in the modern arts.

"No, she's never really had it, only threatened with it," said Ellen, almost apologetically.

"When she does have it, then she'll take to 'New Thought'; they all do. And now, dearie, I'm going to get you a nice hot cup o' tea."

But her guest protested against the trouble.

"Now, look here, dearie, it's a perfect godsend to me—I'm pledged by a society I belong to to do three kind acts daily, or pay a fine! And I'm about distracted finding people to pamper. There's no one at home but me and the Swede girl—my son makes me keep a servant, and pays her wages, too—but I ain't payin' twenty-five dollars a month to a Swede girl an' spoilin' her with waitin' on into the bargain. No, dearie, I'd rather pay my fine."

Tea never tasted so fragrant as the brew poured from the old blue-and-white Delft pot; the eggs done with cheese and savory herbs were a revelation to Ellen, who knew eggs only as commodities to be boiled or fried; and there was crisp brown toast and honey. The fat lady panted about hospitably, warming meantime to her favorite theme.

"I do declare I don't know what the world's coming to. When I was a girl I never did hear of this nervous prostration; if a girl felt badly and 'twas the spring o' the year, they stirred her up some sulphur and molasses, an' in a week or two she was ready to help with the spring cleaning."

"They don't seem to be real young, either, the way they used to be when I was a girl——"

"No; youth ain't what it was in my day; we had none o' this foolishness 'bout colors blendin' or bein' artistic. We had the Bible on the center table of our parlor, and a wreath of hair of them that had passed beyond over the mantelpiece."

"And we had more young men sittin' out the evenings with us."

"More, indeed! This generation don't run to marryin' or givin' in marriage. Now, my daughter'd turn from the handsomest man that ever trod shoe leather to a rickety ol' piece o' furniture you and me'd throw on the ash pile."

It was a congenial theme, and both women warmed to it handsomely. Presently the fat lady's eye began to brighten with the kindling of an idea, until she finally burst forth with:

"Land sakes! Seems's if I had been lookin' for you for years! Did you ever think about havin' a time?"

"A time?" repeated Ellen vaguely.

"Yes, a time, goin' off somewheres, an' seein' the sights—seein' just what you want to see whether it's improvin', refinin', elevatin', or not. Talkin' how you've a mind ter talk; sayin' 'Law me suz' as often as you please, wearin' your old shoes, takin' the stiff'ners out'n your collar—just havin' a good time!"

"Lord, ain't I just thought of havin' a good time all my life!" said Ellen wistfully. "First we had sickness and bad luck, and we put the mortgage on, then there was the years we was payin' it off. Seems if my hull life was spent in nursing that mortgage one way or another. The place has been clear two years now, but I never seem any closer to my good time."

"Now, see here, dearie, you take that good time. Just snatch it. You told me a few minutes ago you had sixty-two dollars o' boarder money in your pocket. Who cooked for them boarders, and earnt that money? Just you tell me that!"

"I did."

"An' you tell me, dearie, are you gettin' any younger, day b' day? You've turned sixty, ain't you?"

"I be."

"Then you take that money and come with me to Brooklyn on it. I got no hankerin' for New York; it's too wicked for me. They might catch me and turn me into a white slave, and me a respectable grandmother, or they might make a show girl of me. I hear many a woman has been lured onto the stage in New York, whether she's a

mind ter or not. No, dearie, I ain't takin' any chances on New York. Brooklyn is called the City of Churches, and that's the place for us. Now, dearie, don't worry over your family; they'll appreciate you a sight more when you come back. Let 'um get good and hungry for one of your boiled dinners, good and hungry for your doughnuts; let 'um see how far your daughter's 'art and crafty' housekeepin' will carry 'um

pleased, and in such accents as appealed to them. The architecture of Plymouth Church, while it could hardly be reckoned one of the wonders of the world, evoked a cheerful stream of eloquence on the part of the young man with the megaphone, whose jests fell on virgin soil, as far at least as the two ladies from New England were concerned.

"In mentioning the name of that eloquent divine, Henry Ward Beecher, the



"Now, Mrs. Haskell, do take more care of yourself."

along; let 'um miss you good, 'n' hard 'n' strong—'n' then go back!"

Ellen Haskell drew the sixty-two dollars of boarder money from her pocket.

"How much does it take to go to the City of Churches?" she inquired, and the night waned while they made their calculations.

A couple of days later the two friends were perched aloft on the "Seeing Brooklyn" wagon, where, free from the censorship of their more exacting offspring, they relapsed into the old slippers of speech, admiring what they

Demosthenes of Brooklyn, a little poem comes to mind, written by a friend of his to commemorate an amusing incident. One day Mr. Beecher was calling on some people who kept chickens, and one of the hens laid an egg in his hat, which the divine had inadvertently left on the porch. If my memory serves me right, ladies and gentlemen, the little poem is as follows:

"Said a great Congregational preacher,
To a hen: 'You're a wonderful creature.'
The hen just for that
Laid an egg in his hat,
And thus did the Hen-ry Ward Beecher."

Some of the other passengers were inclined to deprecate the entertainment furnished by the sights of Brooklyn. "Under the auspices"—that was the splendid phrase—of societies, incorrigibly addicted to taking trips, they had viewed the wonders of the Continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and "The City of Churches" seemed to suffer by comparison. But Ellen and her friend took little stock in these cavers, and summed them up in the one word "affected." As far as they were personally concerned, Aladdin had rubbed his lamp, and showed them the wonders of Ormuz and of Ind in the shops of Fulton Street, the mazes of Prospect Park, and the glittering white-fronted restaurants where griddle cakes are baked in the windows, and the sun never sets on their giving and taking of orders.

Here they took their meals, keenly enjoying the comparison of foreign methods with their own.

"No, dearie, there's not enough shortening in them doughnuts, and I'd 'a' sweetened up my lard with a fresh-cut raw potato before I fried 'um, wouldn't you?" inquired the fat lady, with conviction.

"Yes, I would, and I'd put in a mite more sugar, too, but I like her coffee and I like her beans. Seems 's if allowance oughter be made for her slippin' up, sometimes, though, seeing how many she's got to cook for, and at it all day long, too. 'Twould run me crazy never bein' able to get one meal out of the way before I started in on another."

"She's got her hands full, and no mistake," sighed the fat lady sympathetically, with a vision of the busy wife of the proprietor cooking in the basement.

The days fairly fled away. A week had gone before they realized it. A round of the five-cent theaters of evenings, with soda-counter refreshments afterward, jaunts on the open cars, tea and rice cakes at a "Japanese" tea garden—would the wonders of this Eldorado never cease?

Ellen had written her change of plan

to her family before leaving Massachusetts, merely stating that she had decided not to visit Mrs. Price or Cousin Mary Forbes, but that she was going to take a little trip with a "new-found friend."

On the receipt of this, the family emptied itself from further chores, labors, or responsibilities. It merely sat with folded hands, and waited for the sky to fall. Ellen did not write a second letter; the nonchalant picture postal was the medium she chose to acquaint them with her brilliant cosmopolitanism. Abel, on bringing home from the post office one of these highly colored and somewhat exaggerated representations of the pomp and opulence of Fulton Street, remarked to Lemuel, as he threw it on the supper table:

"Whatever has come over mother to go and conduct herself just like a boarder!"

It was not, however, till she became acquainted with the "Nicolymphia" that Ellen discovered dregs in her heady metropolitan draft. The "Nicolymphia" was a five-cent theater on Fulton Street, its trade-mark a plaster lady holding aloft an electric banner that winked its name joyously from the bridge to the courthouse. The far-reaching beacon of the plaster siren had the effect one night of including Ellen Haskell and her friend among the multifarious audience assembled to witness among other features of the entertainment "The Mother's First False Step," as set forth by moving pictures with a garnishing of dim lights and slow music.

The mother of the moving drama was young; so were her children, her husband, and her methods of housekeeping. It was not made clear to the audience whether the villain effected his entrance to the slovenly dovecot by leaving the groceries, the ice, or in tracing a leak from the kitchen sink—but there he was—plainly in his hours of ease as manifested by his waxed mustache and the undaunted character of his checked suit. Pointing with a carefully manicured hand away from the scenes of domestic confusion toward New York the mother took the fatal hint, and, putting on a frivolous picture

hat, left the clothes boiling on the stove, the pot roast simmering in the oven, and the baby's bottle scalding in the pan! As the music died away in the semidarkness in a long, shuddering groan, Ellen burst into tears, and, grasping her friend by the hand, murmured: "After all, a mother's place is home."

It was raining when they left the theater, and the interior of "the sinker palace" was hot and humid from the steaming wraps and umbrellas of the patrons. The calling of orders in the cheerful vernacular seemed less wittily inspired than usual. "Her" doughnuts were a little "sad" that evening, and her coffee did not seem quite up to the mark. The fat lady was unaccountably silent, too. She was thinking of her Swedish cook's method of preparing eggs with cheese and fine herbs. As they were returning home, Ellen became aware that her friend's pace had settled into a sort of leviathan run, in which, scenting danger, she joined without a word.

"What was it? What was the matter?" she demanded when their key had been turned on the common peril.

"A man!" said the fat lady dramatically. "A man who never took his eyes off you when you were eating your flannel cakes and sirup. At first I thought he was just hungry, standing there gazing through the window, but when he started up Fulton Street after us, I didn't waste any time gettin' here."

"I wonder if it could 'av' been those



The glittering, white-fronted restaurants where griddle cakes are baked in the windows.

purple pansies I put on my old black bonnet—they did freshen it up so." And Ellen cast a glance, not wholly devoid of coquetry, at the mirror. "But I never dreamed of their attracting attention."

"A gentleman to see Mrs. Haskell; he says he's an old friend," announced the little maid.

Ellen snatched off the bonnet with the allegedly ensnaring pansies.

"I got a feeling it's that scamp that followed us," stated the fat lady in a stage whisper. "Land sakes! 'Tain't any one else!"

And without further ado she took the first position for hysterics, and began

to scream as she recognized in Abel—who, unused to city ways, had followed the maid upstairs—the man who had been watching them through the window of the restaurant.

"Why, it's only Abel!" soothed Mrs. Haskell. "Don't take on so, Mrs. Tucker; let me make you acquainted with my husband."

And the trio shook hands primly, and exchanged the restrained greeting of their native New England hillside. The Haskell's might have parted at their kitchen door ten minutes before, for any emotion they showed, yet it was undoubtedly what a certain type would designate as "the psychological moment" with them.

But not till the fat lady had excused herself did Abel feel sufficiently unconstrained to say:

"Well, how you be, mother?"

And Ellen to reply:

"Nicely, thank you. How's all the folks? An' how's Hilda been doin' for you an' Lem?"

"Well, mother, the 'meenoo,' as the boarders call it, has been chiefly golden-rod, sometimes it's been autumn leaves—but there ain't been a baked bean or a fish ball or a boiled dinner in the house since you left."

"Why, whatever does she feed you on, father?"

"The Lord knows the names it goes by, mother, but it comes out of the chafing dish. It's all done on the table, whatever it is, with goldenrod and the autumn leaves kinder backing it up in one of them long-necked bottles with straw around 'em. Lem and me drove to town and laid in twelve bottles of 'Dyar's Dyspepsia Cordial.'"

She shot a humorous glance at him over her spectacles, but for Abel the situation lacked humor.

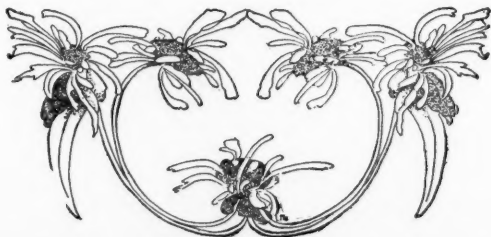
"Now, s'here, mother, we all know we ain't been doin' right be you; you've held the heavy end of the stick too long. But if you come back with me to-morrow you'll find a whole lot of change. There's a sink in the kitchen, with runnin' water; there's a new stove, too—only it's a range, with nickel trimmin's—handsome enough for any one's parlor; but it's in your kitchen, mother. Lem an' me didn't have the face to ask you to come back unless things were goin' to be a whole lot handier, and Hilda has made you what she calls a *sten-cile-d* table cover."

"Law me, there must be quite a change to hum!" said Ellen, with unconscious satire.

"An', mother, we never knew how you felt about things before. But you ain't goin' to feel that way any more, because things aire goin' to be different, if you'll only stop gallivantin' like a boarder an' come hum to us."

Abel's weather-beaten face positively blushed as his hand sought hers; it had been so long since he had dropped what he called "courtin' tricks," and Ellen agreed to return.

"Yes," said the fat lady when she heard of the arrangement later. "What did I tell you before we come away? Yes—go home now that you've taught 'um their lesson, and don't let 'um think any more that you're a kitchen mop, put there for their convenience; and if they do, go away an' let 'um miss the mop some more. Land sakes! What don't a little absence, now an' then, do for families?"





Freshman Social

By Edwin LeSabin

Author of "Prexy's Niece," "Cleopatra at Peterkin," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE.

YOU know that at all institutions of higher education there is this necessary evil, the Freshman class; the amœba form which gropes i' the bud until its chrysalis breaks and it emerges as the glorious bird of sophomore. Yes, this metaphor is a little mixed, but so is the freshman class.

My class was the class of Steenty-naught—the finest freshman class that ever entered old Peterkin. Ask any of us. But the class that followed, at respectful distance—the class of Steenty-one—was a condition of jeans and bangs aloofly to be viewed. Consequently, as the latest detail who must bear aloft the torch of culture, at old Peterkin, and must at the same time police the premises, we of Steenty-naught, sophs, had our work cut out for us.

The freshman class included one pretty girl and two football near-candidates; this about summed up the resources. So, to whip such a class into anything like proper shape, demanded a sophomore committee extraordinary, with powers superhuman. Happily, Biffy Robins and I were elected thereto. As can readily be appreciated, an energetic, well-balanced sophomore committee in charge of freshman discipline is of more real value to the tone of a college than is Prexie himself.

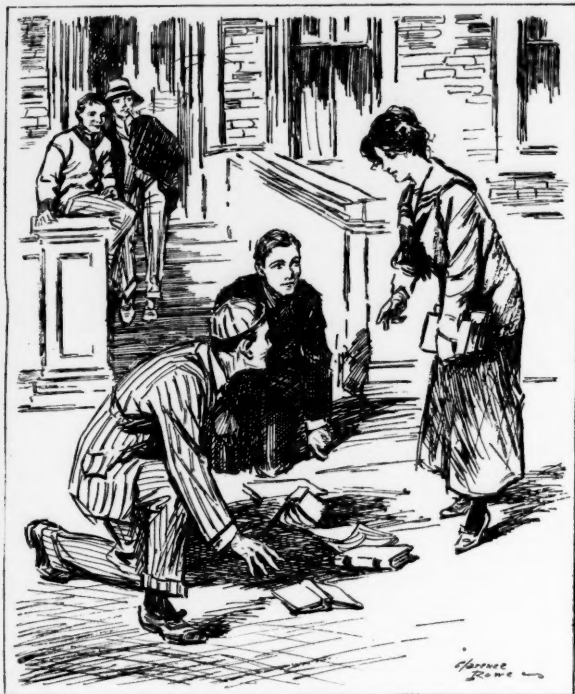
We will pass by the annual scrap. We at old Peterkin are more *recherche*

than to depend upon brute force to accomplish our ends. Brains and brawn are our busy B's. The real sophomore event at the varsity is the freshman social.

According to traditions, the freshman class meeting, to choose officers and committees and decide upon social dates, was secret, behind barricaded doors, and a bribed janitor. Only two of us from the sophomore committee might squeeze in between ceiling and roof, and listen; but we managed to jot down the names and the date. Ray Macomber was president, John Johnson was vice president, which was sufficient of evil to the date—that same being the night of October twentieth.

Of course, the freshie president and vice president must be kidnaped. To kidnap the freshman president, or marshal, or whatever he might be called, and prevent his appearance at the social, or ball, or milk-warming, or whatever that might be called, is a triumph greater than to make Theta Nu Epsilon or any other sophomore shiner society. By time-honored custom at old Peterkin the freshman president was to be firmly persuaded into the country or other sequestered spot, and released in time, if not in mind, for chapel of the morning after.

By natural selection and for the honor of Hot Tamale Tau frat it devolved upon Biffy, seconded by undersigned, to



Whenever she grabbed another dropped; until she shed books even as she shedded sweetness.

arrange that the freshman president, class of Steenty-one, should be kidnaped so far and so surely that, as Granny Whitten, our law, would put it, a *habeas corpus* or a *caveat emptor* or a *Carthago delenda est* could not resurrect him until later.

Hence these were busy days at conspiracy headquarters of Hot Tamale Tau. But the freshman president proved as elusive as an Orangeman in Cork. Of course, some freshman presidents and vice presidents object to the kidnaping process; and as they are apt to object physically as well as mentally, it behooved us to know whether we were to bind and gag a six-footer or, worse, a red-header. So we must find Ray, and size up Ray, and estimate and perhaps gloat upon Ray. However, we en-

gaged a cab, anyway, under contract that if Ray was a six-footer we were to deposit three dollars for broken windows, and if a red-header, six.

Where was Ray? A rumor stated that the Zeta Zips had a line on Ray Macomber, and were aiding him by some alias or other; and we also heard that the Sigma Slugs had spiked him, and were keeping him safe, and tutoring him until after the fatal night. Any frat that was rushing the freshman class president would protect him for a stand-in—and would give him a double dose at initiation. This is brotherly love.

While we were locating Ray, Biffy found the pretty freshman girl. He always did.

So he buttonholed me, and drew me apart.

"Have you seen her?" he communicated, *sotto voce*, or *viva voce*, or *vox populi*, or whatever it is.

"Who?" I invited, in my best sophomore English.

"The new peach."

"No."

"Wears a hat with a feather and a long coat." The description was rather crude, but this was when Biffy had just assumed the chair of society editor of the *Daily Peterkin*, and was green on costume.

"What's her name?"

"Tell you later."

And I knew that he would.

The sophomore committee work and concomitant matters, such as assigning among ourselves freshman studies that would enable us to supervise our charges

every hour of the day, intervened; and when Biffy next approached me, with radiant visage, I thought that he must have located the president, at last. But—

"She's in Botany B!" he informed. "Who?"

"My pretty freshman girl. Name's Macomber, too. Must be his sister. I've scheduled for Botany B. She's a beaut. You wait for the ten o'clock bell, and you can see her come out of the library."

Man hath waited longer for much less. Personally conducted by the ardent Biff, I waited. At the stroke of ten the library disgorged—and presently Biff nudged me, She came! She came, maybe she saw, she conquered. I felt that funny feeling—that sudden paralysis of the aorta and the valvular convulsion adjacent; and wondered if my trousers hung straight. For she was a peach, all right; a genuine peach; one of those conjunctions of a high-school senior and a college fresh-maid, bringing into our jaded midst the aroma of girlhood in the guise of a *Portia*.

But let us return to our lamb. The gaze of two bold, bad sophomores must have rattled her, for as she would trip lithely past her books began to slip. She grabbed, and whenever she grabbed another dropped; until she shed books even as she shed sweetness. Biffy proceeded to pick some up for her, and, of course, he had the nerve to glance casually at a flyleaf. I also gathered ye blossoms whilst I may; one of the books had sprawled wide open, and the name therein was "Ray Macomber." To make certain I looked inside another. "Ray Macomber!" Huh!

The peach blushed divinely as we straightened, laden.

"Pardon," quoth Biffy, with his finest bow; "but may I not carry your parcels, ma'am? A little learning is a dangerous thing."

"Thank you," she trilled. "But so is a little sophomore."

Humph! We carefully resigned our precious freightage, which was such delectable fruitage, and with caps off sped her upon her way.

"Ye gods!" panted Biffy, pale, facing me. "Did you see it?"

"It!" I rebuked.

"The name in her books! That's Ray Macomber—that's the class president!"

So it must be—so she must be. And thus at old Peterkin was demonstrated woman suffrage. The freshmen had elected a coed as class president! The contingency was new; the realization was startling. Biffy was in no condition to meet either, and I was a little weak-kneed myself.

It would not do for us to confess to the rest of the sophomore committee our misgivings. That committee contained hard-hearted Neros, and Herods, and Caligulas, who in the stern idea of duty would kidnap a tender, beautiful she-president as promptly as they would behead, or boil in oil, or feed to the eels any freshman whatsoever of the masculine persuasion. Such devotion wins battles, but it is tough on the conscience; and if Biffy and I were sophs, we also were human.

The tidings spread right rapidly. Ray Macomber was a girl! That, indeed, put an unwonted aspect upon the eternal enmity 'twixt soph and fresh. But if the fellows were willing to back down and compromise on the maltreatment of only the vice president, who now so wild for the original persecution as the sister women?

The sophomore girls immediately called an indignation meeting, organized their own committee, and volunteered to take care of the freshman president if we men would attend to the freshman vice president. The Mu Mu girls were the worst, because Ray—I should say, Miss Macomber—had pledged herself to the Gamma Fudges.

This was bad. There's no cruelty like that of woman to woman when she begins to fight, and the soph girls were fully aroused. It was their first opportunity to shed blood, and to prove their valiancy, and to demonstrate, visually, that they were just as good as the men. In suffragism the girls of Steenty-one had nothing over the girls of Steenty-naught, except the pretty president.

In the privacy of our room at Hot



The peach filled the room with the glory of her presence, and even the sofa, to which I fell, was soft.

Tamale Tau house Biffy took me by the hand, and shut the door.

"It must, it shall not be," he announced, with deep emotion, and trembling accents. "Let them pose as he and she Caligulas and Neros. To us falls the mantle of Don Quixote or Buffalo Bill."

"Which am I?" I prompted.

"You," declared Biffy thoughtfully, "can be my best man if I win her. And I'll let you call there to-night, with me, so she'll know you. We'll plan her rescue together—but she and I will put the fine touches on the details while we're botanizing to examine moon flowers and night-blooming cereuses."

Exactly how Biffy managed to secure

permission to call on the peach, I cannot say. But he would have been invited to call upon the empress dowager if he had set about it. The peach received us in her landlady's parlor, where there was one prickly pear haircloth sofa, two p-p haircloth chairs, one bamboo rocker, wobbly marble-top table, antique carpet, heatless stove, and reflector lamp. But the peach filled the room with the glory of her presence, and even the sofa, to which I fell, was soft.

The peach at first seemed plainly—no, not plainly, but beautifully—overcome by the honor thrust upon her. It may have been an issue in her mind whether

we had arrived officially or socially. But by our polite conversation we put her at ease, and calmed her fluttering breast. Thus—

"Gorgeous day, wasn't it?"

"Yes, indeed."

And—

"Wasn't that botany a fright today?"

"Perfectly dreadful. I thought the professor simply horrid."

And—

"Which sorority do you think you'll join, Miss Macomber?"

"Well—the Gamma Fudges have been awfully nice to me. I know more of the Gamma Fudge girls. Are you fraternity boys?"

Boys!

"Oh, yes."

"Which fraternity?"

"Hot Tamale Tau, certainly!"

And—

"Have you been down to football practice, Miss Macomber?"

"Yes. 'Most every afternoon. It's going to be a splendid team, isn't it?"

"Shouldn't wonder. Weak at center, though."

And—but the doorbell rang its dread signal, and just as we were in the midst of soothing her, as above, so that she would have faith that our intentions were honorable, entered an element of discord: John Johnson, the fresh vice president and the peach's understudy!

Said John Johnson was not to be reckoned a peach, but a prune. You appreciate the wide distinction. He was particularly a prune because he was good-looking, for a child, and was pledged to Oh My Omicron. Johnny picked out the haircloth chair nearest the stove poker, and a deathly chill permeated the erstwhile cordial atmosphere.

But assuredly no two sophomores, no twain Hot Tamale Taus, were to yield to any freshie and embryonic Oh My Omicron. All the ethics of Peterkin best society forbade. However, he put up a good fight, in an amateurish high-scholar way, and did not succumb to the piercing cold of the freezing-out process until eleven o'clock, and the land-

lady had twice snooped in to ask if the lamp needed replenishing!

Johnny having been disposed of, 'twas our turn to make our regretful exit; and Biff shunted me out ahead, the hallway being rather narrow for three, but delightful for two. When he caught up with me, by the jubilant vigor with which he slapped me on the back I might interpret that the world was rostrate.

"I win, Jocko!" he asserted. "I told her that we came not as enemies but as friends. Told her how I had a sister or two myself, a mother and six aunts, and that maidenhood never need fear aught from me—or from you, if I was along. I'm going to take her to the social."

"You!" I ejaculated. "Who said so?"

"I did. Also she. She was going with this Johnny, the vice president, but after I had explained that he would double the peril and jeopardize her beyond any hope of escape, she realized that she would be much safer under my wing."

"But you aren't eligible. You aren't a freshman."

"I will be if I get one more condition. It's only a matter of a couple of months. But I'm eligible, anyhow. I'm on the staff of the *Daily Peterkin*. I'm a journalist; that's enough."

"Nevertheless," I reminded, "you'll cut a great figure—chairman of the sophomore committee on hostilities taking the freshman president to the freshman social!"

However, when the nobility in Biff's nature is aroused by a pretty girl, he must follow the flag or bust. And as the case promised to be of public interest, I suffered myself to be drawn into it. Besides, he was my brother in Hot Tamale Tau, and a Hot Tamale Tau man will go through fire, fire sale, and bankruptcy to help out a frater.

Biffy was a strategist. Had his time been that of the Civil instead of a very uncivil War, he would have been one who went from the plow field or ribbon counter and led an army. Genius of a high military order slumbered restlessly

beneath his carrot shock. Now, in the case of the annual freshman social, the prospective "those present" were not presumed to start from their customary habitats. 'Twas a *faux pas* to set out from one's room or boarding-house lair; but 'twas customary and *comme il faut* in freshman society to use as a base some store anxious for your account, or some barn, or some dry-goods box, or coal hole, or down-torn cellar, or a convenient tree. Thus might the sophomore myrmidons be deceived, even although the fugitive might be obliged to dress en route, at full gallop, with the likelihood of being hung up by the spike tails on a back fence.

Keeping in view these proclivities which characterized freshman social night, Biffy the Great decided that he and the peach should sally by the front door, as openly as if going to church. How simple! Simplicity is the true test of greatness.

So Biff contracted with Jimmy, the cabby, to drive up boldly and promptly at eight o'clock sharp, while the foe was guarding the Gamma Fudge house, trailing Johnny, the vice president, from the Oh My Omicron house, and examining basements, coal holes, the cemetery, and other likely places.

As to Johnny, the vice president, deposed, in escortorial—is that good?—capacity, by Biffy the Great, it was to be accepted that he had willingly resigned, *pro bono classico*. Then, all suddenly, he and the peach evolved an appendix to our campaign. Because we all loved the peach so, and she was the president, and a girl, Johnny volunteered to make a demonstration in the rear, if necessary, while we emerged by the front. He didn't seem sore at Biffy, who, resistless as fate, had wrested from him the prize package of his freshman career, to date; and he even imposed upon himself the empty honor of sallying, with a dummy, by the back door, and thus, by drawing the attention of the enemy, divert the frontal attack. The kindly landlady agreed to be dummy, if we would insure her clothes.

As for me—cheu! I was elected for gooseberry. I was to be what Granny

Whitten, our Blackstone and Webster of Hot Tamale Tau, termed the accessory during the fact, and goat after it. I was to be the center who passed the ball, and the guard who made the hole, and the half who led the interference, so that Biffy should score the touchdown; I should handle the opposition while Biffy handed out the peach. Huh!

On this the evening of the freshman social, quiet old Peterkin was no more excited than any locality would be, say, after a championship football game won, or during a Tippecanoe parade, or receiving news of the battle of Gettysburg or Manila, or of Colonel Theodore vs. Leo Felis Africanus. Freshmen were as scarce as sophomores were plenty. The moon rose crimson and portentous; terror rode in the air, and we were very glad that the peach was not to be exposed.

As a feint, Biffy donned the Ku Klux garb of overalls and slouch hat, protective to the sophs in their red work; but underneath he wore his evening clothes of doeskins, spike tail, and vest and hair alike parted in the middle. Also a heart of a chevalier.

Sometimes I think that it was Jimmy, the cabby; sometimes I think that it was Johnny, the vice president; sometimes I think that it was the peach herself. The defalcation is hard to place, although distinct as a fact. However, while I waited at the church—I mean, on the porch, and Biff organized the staff inside, the cab drove up, timed to the dot.

"All right!" I hissed, through a crack in the doorway.

Out hustled Biff, convoying his veiled peach. He declares that the house operations had gone like clockwork: John Johnson and the landlady, who was conveniently small, were stationed at the back door casting their shadows outside, as a lure, and ready to sally; the organization was magnificent, apparently, and the peach had ascended the stairs to her room for a moment, and the purpose of powdering her nose, and presently I had whispered the signal.

It was not a long walk, down to the gate; about ten feet. A fellow and



Biffy and the peach were getting over the course a little faster to-night.

girl could cover it in forty minutes; that was the strolling record, for this boarding house. I'd had several girls here myself, and I know. Biffy and the peach were getting over the course a little faster to-night—I hastening them on—and the only discord was yaps afar and spasmodic crunching of bones as soph found fresh, when—

Instant, through copse and heath, arose
Bonnets and spears and bended bows.

At least, I'll answer for the bonnets,
although I didn't see any cops.

On right, on left, above, below,
Sprung up at once the lurking foe.

All girls!

At once there rose so wild a yell—

But, no matter. There are four double-ell rhymes required in this verse; you know what that must include. In-

9

quirers are referred to "Lady of the Lake," canto vi, stanza 17, fourth line. Even that is pleasanter than fighting hairpins, although war, according to Sherman, is the same as according to Scott.

I led the interference. We tore along; they also tore along; they tore a long strip from my last fall's coat; they tore the straps from Biff's overalls; they tore the peach's veil, and her feelings.

"What's the matter with that demonstration in the rear?" gasped Biffy. "Tell 'em to trot out that demonstration in the rear, can't you?"

Judging by the ripping, and the clutching, and a certain sensation of weakness in and about my apparel, it seemed to me that there was a sufficiency of such demonstration already. But again, no matter. We managed to heave onward, and, dragging half of the Mu Mu Chap-

ter, and a sprinkling of Gamma Fudges, Alpharettes, and Whilk Sisterhood with us to the cab door, we flopped in. The door slammed; I still grasped a side comb and a pince-nez—minus only the lenses—and Biffy grasped half an overalls strap; but the peach was inside the cab, the motive power was gallumping, and wheezing, the wheels were going round, and we all were saved, saved!

Our first care was for our fair charge. That had been pretty tough on the peach.

Was she hurt? No, she didn't think she was hurt.

Clothes much hurt? Some, she was afraid; but it couldn't be helped.

We had done the best that we could; we were sorry; hard luck, etc. Yes, she knew all that.

Naturally her voice was tremulous. Few buds of womankind are called upon to go through with such an experience. In fact, those emigrant women upon the plains had now no stories to tell the peach; and she was qualified to be president of the Territorial Dames of Apache Arizona.

"If those other people had made that demonstration in the rear," insisted Biffy, "the way we had planned, all this wouldn't have happened. Who told on us, anyway? Huh!"

We much would have liked to exchange sentiments about the demonstration that failed, but our fair companion in victory and vituperation was devel-

oping symptoms of hysteria; and we turned our attention again to peachward. The first electric-light corner we had ignored, deeming that under conditions she would appreciate the courtesy and interval; here, at the second electric-light corner, we cast upon her a solicitous look, to appraise damages. Would that look might have withered ere it reached her! For she wasn't the peach! She was the landlady!

Biffy uttered a queer sound between a turtle and a condor—to such an extent his feelings mingled—and bumped his head on the cab roof.

"Drive back!" he yelled at Jimmy. "Drive back! There's a mistake in here!"

"No," quoth the landlady gently. "This is a Mrs.-take. Mr. Johnson has the Miss-take. You're too late. They're gone."

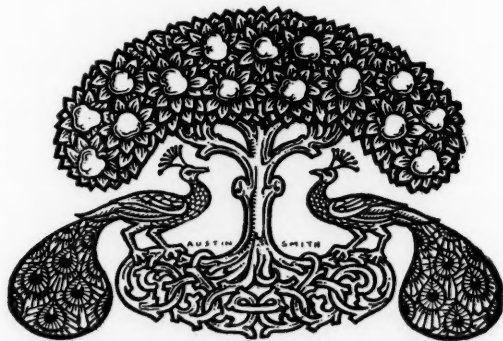
"Where?" pleaded Biffy. "How, and when?"

"To the social. By the back way, and lately. They waited for us to go by the front way. I guess they weren't molested—bless their hearts; there was so much commotion over us!"

Biffy was game.

"Drive on!" he bade to Jimmy. "Drive on—and on—and on! 'Tis we for the social, anyway."

And the landlady, he claims, wasn't a half-bad two-stepper after all—although a little slow on the reverse in the waltz.



The MEASURING STICK



By

NALBRO BARTLEY

Author of

"Shadows," "The Tinsel Queen," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. M. BUNKER

JUSTICE gave the girl a comfortable chair, and motioned to a pile of magazines.

"Mrs. Austin won't be long," she told her in a soothing manner. Justice had opened the door for many pale-faced, tired-looking girls who entered half unwillingly, half ashamed.

As the old servant's steady footsteps died away the girl threw aside the magazine she was pretending to read, and started to her feet. She glanced quickly into the adjoining rooms to see if any one was coming. Then she rebuttoned her thin blue serge coat with nervous, trembling fingers, and gave a hasty twitch to the rough felt sailor which sat strangely on the mass of crinkly gold hair.

"There's no use in staying," she told herself sharply. "She's going to be like all the rest; committees, board of directors, cross-examinations, and soup-kitchen tickets! You were a fool to come in."

She tiptoed cautiously to the outer door. To be caught stealing out like a thief in the night might be awkward. There was barely time to reach the ponderous storm door, swing the catch back, and slip down the steps. Slip down the stone steps into the careless, contemptuous world where she had learned to battle.

Her thin fingers examined the catch. There was some patent lock that needed

a clever twist. She tore a finger nail as she tried to wrench it out of place. It seemed a barrier shutting her away from the outside turmoil.

"What are you doing?" asked a woman's vibrant, contralto voice from behind.

With a stifled, nervous cry she turned, her hands thrust behind her back, her eyes staring into the woman's appealingly.

"I—I wanted to get away," she gasped. "Please let me go away—I shouldn't have come, Mrs. Austin."

The woman put one firm, pink hand on the thin, blue-serge shoulder. She drew the girl toward her, a touch of the maternal in her gesture making the fugitive yield.

"Come inside and have a cup of tea," she suggested, as if trying to pick a door lock was the most natural thing in the world. "It's getting colder out, don't you think so?"

"Yes," she answered confusedly. "But I'd—rather go."

She found herself seated in the cozy chair, with a cushion tucked under her feet. She found a dainty Chinese teacup in her trembling fingers, and a plate of warm toast standing on the arm of the chair. She found herself looking with unashamed eyes into the face of her hostess, whose own brown ones smiled in a friendly manner.

"Why did you want to go, Lois?"

asked Mrs. Austin. "Because Doctor Gordon told me something about you?"

She nodded, like a frightened child.

"And because I don't want—committees."

"Committees? What do you mean?"

Mrs. Austin leaned forward in an interested manner.

"It means," said the girl slowly, her sweet, high voice becoming steady and full-pitched, "it means that I will not be taken before a committee of women who are investigating social conditions. I will not answer the personal, impertinent questions they demand. I will not be looked on as an utter outcast, a social degenerate. I am not an illiterate girl, Mrs. Austin. I didn't hail from the slums. If I have been—unfortunate—it wasn't altogether my fault—"

"Oh, my dear, it never is your fault," interrupted the woman quickly. "Don't think I believe that sort of thing. I don't. I never do."

"When Doctor Gordon stumbled across me," she continued, as if the

other had not spoken, "he watched me for a long time. He can tell you. By and by they found out in the office about—Max Ormsby—so they told me to go. I didn't know what else to do, Mrs. Austin, when I went to Doctor Gordon and told him everything. He sent me here. I suppose he talked to you about me, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"At first I didn't want to come. I was tired of charity people who used you in their annual reports. And college students who looked at you with the same expression that a taxidermist does when he finds a rare specimen. That is the way many social students view these things. Doctor Gordon said you were different. He told me that all your life you had worked for girls, young girls particularly, who needed to be started right. He said you had radical, advanced views, and you weren't afraid to tell them to the public. Of course"—here the delicately molded pink lips curved a bit cynically—"you are a rich woman. And the public listens. You say the unconventional things, some of us have been unfortunate enough to do the unconventional things. And—"

"Why, you're only a baby," said Edith Austin quickly. "Only a baby. I told Alan Gordon you were. He tried to convince me you were an embittered young woman."

She put her teacup down, and rested her black-gray head on her two firm, pink hands. The dark red of her tea gown showed to good effect her still white, beautiful throat, and a rare old ring on her finger glistened like a drop of fresh blood.



"What are you doing?" asked a woman's vibrant, contralto voice from behind.

"I do believe in unconventional things," she said, smiling, "as far as they can help unconventional people. I'm a sort of homeopathic philanthropist. All my life I have tried to fight for young girls who needed some one to fight for them. Doctor Gordon growls at me, and attempts to disapprove, but he has sent me more young women who needed help than any other friend I have. Doctor Gordon is a good man, Lois."

The girl nodded slowly.

"Yes, I think he is."

There was a pause, during which they studied each other carefully, guardedly. Then the girl added:

"I don't suppose you know everything about—me, do you?"

The little catch in her voice made the woman's heart beat sympathetically.

"I don't know, Lois. Will you tell me? If we're going to be friends, we may as well learn things about each other. Then we'll forget the unpleasant parts as soon as we've had them help us with the future. I don't believe in remembering, that is the one big thing in which I am stubborn. I don't believe in keeping the past as a constant reminder. It's dead and done with. You make your own new past."

"Well," said the girl curtly, looking down at the floor, "there isn't so much to tell, after all. I'm twenty-two now. I must look older. I was an orphan, brought up in an institution. You know what institutions are, even if they have a board of health and a Christmas tree. All my life I wanted to belong to some one. I wanted to be loved. That's what the children miss. Some one to love them—not to have a disinterested board sweep through and call you 'the poor darlings.'"

"I left the asylum when I was sixteen to do office work. I was supposed to still board there. It was a little better for a while, because I was so busy finding out things about people in the world. You've no idea how shut-off you are in an orphan asylum. When I was seventeen I began to learn what discontent and envy mean. Every young girl who has no money or friends learns that. The office work was hard

and monotonous, and no advancement. The asylum was cold, and subdued, and quiet. I was young—I wasn't exactly humpbacked—and I wanted to live. By and by I met Mr. Ormsby." The yellow head was thrown back defiantly as she spoke, the defiance which youth always exhibits at such times. "It flattered me to have him pay me attention. He was handsome, and rich, and clever. And I believed in him. That was the worst of it. Looking back now, I don't see how what happened could have very well been avoided. I was only an interesting episode to him. He was my whole world. Anyway, I left the office and the asylum, and we went abroad. No one cared. No one tried to keep track of me. We were gone nearly a year. Before we came back I realized dimly that it was a horrible mistake, that his love was the wrong kind of love, and I was ostracized, ruined. Of course, men don't think of those things. He didn't. He began to like some one else; and while he didn't let me go hungry, there were days—"

"I know, I understand," added Mrs. Austin softly. "He finally left you, and you had to sell your few things to get back."

"How did you know?" The deep blue eyes looked up like a startled child's.

"Because they always do," she answered quickly.

"Do they?" said the girl monotonously. "Well, he did. I worked my way back here the best I could. After a long time I got some office work to do—then I had to change places as soon as some one remembered. I was sick in a charity ward for a long time. He was in Europe, I heard, or I suppose I would have crawled to him. He was the only man in the world I knew." She flung out her thin little hands appealingly. "I couldn't help it. I just couldn't help it."

"And you loved him?"

"Of course, I loved him," she said shrilly. "He was the only human being that ever stopped to look at me twice. Of course, I loved him."

"And you didn't know," reminded the

woman gravely, "you had never been told."

"I didn't know," she repeated monotonously, closing her eyes as if in physical pain. "I shouldn't have come here bothering you," she said wearily. "Because I'm not a meek, humble case. I wasn't ever meant to be unfortunate. I knew that from the first. So, the consequences come doubly hard. Like every other girl, I had the hopeless, never-dying thought that some day he might—"

"Marry you."

"They never do," she added slowly. "Never."

"The world calls Max Ormsby a genius," Mrs. Austin mused, shading her face with her hands. "They hail him with a laurel wreath, and you—"

"That was what he used to say," the girl told her eagerly. "He said genius gave the right to disregard conventions. He used to talk beautifully about the love which had no law to repress—"

"Genius gives the right to unbridled love?" The dark eyes flashed fire. "My child, it is in spite of that sort of love that genius finds its expression, not because of it. Men and women who cloak their weaker selves behind the pitiful gauze of misnamed temperament only give to sane men and women a pharisaical tendency to say: 'Thank God, I do a day's dull work at a week's honest wage.'"

"Do you think," the girl asked in an uncertain voice, "do you think it is worth while to start again, to forget and—"

"You have started new," she answered promptly. "Lois, there isn't anything so terrible to forget. You must not let it be terrible. You have risen above the past. You are mentally stronger than the average girl because of what you have experienced. It is never the fact of the so-called melodramatic 'past' which hurts us. It is the not caring that we have had one which leaves the mark. Oh, if I could only make you understand all I feel and think," she said earnestly, tears in the big, brown eyes, "all I want to make girls think. I've had some failures, of course, but more successes. Some day

we'll go calling, you and I, and you'll see some of the homes that—"

"You don't mean they have married?" She put her thin hands up in protest.

"Of course, they have married. Why not?"

"I thought—the woman at the League Workers—said—"

"I know that woman at the League Workers," Mrs. Austin announced grimly, an unexpected flash of temper coming into her calm face. "I have heard her tell girls the same thing before. But it is not so. Your pitiful little story, like thousands of others, is the result of ignorance. Ignorance is what we have to fight, Lois. The price of happiness is always knowledge. And ignorance is not innocence. An ignorant mind is merely an untried mentality which has never stood the white heat of life's flame."

"You make me feel different," the girl whispered, leaning forward to gaze eagerly into the woman's face. "You make me feel like—a human being."

"I'm going to make you a proposition. You may take it or not, just as you like. I need a secretary. I've a dozen odds and ends of correspondence that are running wild, and Doctor Gordon thinks he hasn't spent a decent week unless he has come over to scold about overwork. I'm alone now—my son is in the West—and I'm lonesome. There are any number of things I want done by the right person. I think you are the right person, Lois. Anyway, we can try and see. You can come here as soon as you like. Then we'll begin together. There is only one condition—"

"Mrs. Austin, do you mean this?" The girl's face quivered, and she lost control of the sensitive, twitching mouth. "Do you really mean to let me come here and live, and work for you, and forget—and you knowing and understanding—everything?"

"Everything." A rare smile crossed her lips. "But you must live up to the condition. I shall be a tyrant there. You must forget what has happened. Blot it out, deny it to yourself. You must not admit to your own bothering



"Don! Don! DON!" For a minute she could not go on talking.

conscience that you have ever been any one but Lois King, secretary. It won't be hard after you once try. Brooding, morbid reliving and rethinking over experiences is as dangerous as to have the world pointing its forefinger at you and crying shame. You must be a different girl. There is no reason for you to cower in the dusk and hide your head. You were not to blame. It is the man who should have the world's condemnation. But you and I cannot change the standard of centuries."

She reached out to stroke the thin, white hand.

"Some day, when this scar has healed and no longer throbs at the slightest pressure, some day you will meet the right man, who will ask you to be his wife. I want to see you go to him with as light a heart as a debutante to her first ball. You must always keep in

mind that you are to be a happy wife and mother. You were made to be a mother, Lois. This old idea of a place apart for girls who have been caught in the wheels is cruelly absurd. And I will not have it. You must promise me that you will forget—you will you?"

The deep blue eyes looked into hers with such intensity of gratitude, such pitiful disillusioned youth, that the woman turned away.

"I promise," she said lamely. "I will forget."

"I'm going to send Justice for your things," Mrs. Austin announced in a businesslike tone. "Do you owe anything for board?"

"A little," she faltered.

"Then I'll advance the money. It isn't a gift, Lois, so you won't have to thank me. You may as well come back this afternoon. It'll take us some little time to get acquainted. And there's a dozen letters that ought to be written right away. You'll probably find me a crochety, cranky mistress." She laughed.

"If I can ever thank you," the girl said earnestly. "Oh, do you think I ever can?"

"Thank me? You don't suppose I want to be given daily adoration for doing something that brings me much pleasure. You're a personal satisfaction, Lois. A personal satisfaction to my vanity. I'm proving one of my theories. So you see—"

Lois caught the firm, pink hand, and kissed it reverently.

All afternoon Edith Austin waited as

eagerly as a child until the cab with Justice and Lois drew up before the curb, and the hackman tossed the shabby little packing trunk out on the steps.

"The pink room at the head of the stairs," she told Justice. "See if there's a fire in the grate. I hope you will be comfortable, my dear. You'd better rest a while. We can talk later."

The girl lingered wistfully at the foot of the stairs.

"I'm afraid it's just a dream," she said piteously. "I used to have them in the hospital along with the fever. I used to dream he had come to marry me, and then I'd wake up and see the ward beds, and the nurses, and feel the pain——"

"Ssh!" The brown eyes looked with disapproval. "You're forgetting."

It was early in the evening when Lois fell fast asleep in the small white bed, the yellow head resting easily among the pillows, the thin, white hands grasping the coverlet in unbelievable ecstasy. Mrs. Austin stole upstairs to look at her.

"She's only a baby," she said to Justice, who stood without. "Only a baby that's been neglected."

"Yes, ma'am," admitted Justice, "and if you could have seen her room! A little bandbox of a place without light or heat, and a house full of noisy tramps. It would make your heart ache. Doctor Gordon's waiting downstairs. I came near forgetting."

Mrs. Austin ran down the long flight like a girl. Inside the big library stood a tall, muscular man, whose strong, kindly face lighted up with a tender smile as she placed her hands in his.

"I'm your debtor forever and ever."

"I suppose you've legally adopted her by now?" he teased.

"Not quite. She's upstairs in the pink room—sound asleep! I've made her my secretary."

His bushy eyebrows lifted quickly.

"You don't approve?"

"Not exactly. I thought you would send her to Sunnyfield."

"She wouldn't have been happy at Sunnyfield. That's a place for girls who have never thought. Girls who have

been—different. This girl is refined. She has possibilities. I couldn't see her doing anything but writing my impertinent notes. You noticed her hands, didn't you, Alan?"

"Yes." The doctor strolled over to the fire, and stood in front of it.

"Why don't you say something nice about her?" she demanded impatiently. "Why don't you tell me I've done what I ought to have done?"

"Because I'm not sure you have," he said slowly. "I'm in sympathy with her or I shouldn't have sent her to you—she's unusual, refined, worth while. But to make her your secretary in your own house——"

"Why not?" The brown eyes shot sparks of indignation.

"Edith, have you ever proven your own theories?"

"Of course I have," she flung back defiantly. "There was Alice Todge, and Bess Blake, and the little girl from Coreyville, and——"

"Sufficient unto the day. But have you ever proven the strength of your theories to yourself? How strongly do you believe in them?"

"Alan!" The tone of hurt confidence drove the big man's smile away.

"I mean, Edith, do you think you could stand to see your theory recoil on yourself, do you think you could stand seeing its——"

"Failure?" she flashed. "I know I could. The time May Stone lied to me, and the time I found out about Ella Weber, and——"

"I don't mean that," he said gravely. "I mean how far are you prepared to stand by your theory? Your broad-minded, generous statements about such a girl as Lois. Have you ever had a measuring stick?"

She looked at him in perplexity.

"A measuring stick?" she asked, with a nervous little laugh. "Why, Alan, I never thought of such a thing. If I have a theory I am not a coward about voicing it. I've sent half the conservative townspeople into sleeplessness trying to decide whether I needed a sanitarium or a halo. Of course, I'm ready to stand by my theories. I've

always stood by them, haven't I? A measuring stick?" She laughed again.

"This is the first young woman you have taken into your home as a companion," he said more to himself. "The others developed into maids or shop-girls. What are you going to tell people about her?" he asked out loud. "Are you going to label her as a brand from the burning?"

"Never. She is not to be discussed. Absolutely. Lois is my secretary. She is above suspicion." Again the warm gleam of the maternal shone in her eyes.

The doctor looked at her admiringly.

"You are ready for any measuring stick?"

"I am." She rang the bell. "And I'm going to give you some coffee to make you stop talking about perfectly absurd things. You need a vacation. It's time you sailed for the heatherland, and played you were a shepherd lad again."

"Perhaps. There are others the same thing might apply to." He sat down in the near-by easy-chair. "Edith, you are one of the few women who can distribute warm flannels and still look well in evening dress."

She waived aside the compliment.

"Knowledge is not such a difficult thing to possess as it is a rare one—did you ever think of that, Alan? I've decided that really wise people are those who say the least in the clamorous discussions of reform; instead they keep their own immediate circle of souls in harmony with all things pure. Which is far the more effective way."

"Exactly. What will you do if this girl pockets your small silver?"

"Wait until I'm convinced that you're in league with her, and then turn you both over to the right people. You can't tease me, there's no use in trying. And she is not going to do that sort of thing. Suppose I do have half a dozen failures to one success? Isn't it more than worth while? Would that be your idea of my measuring stick—having her turn thief?"

The doctor welcomed Justice and the tray of coffee.

"No—you don't understand," he said awkwardly, "and perhaps I'm a theorizing old foggy myself. Only Lois is different—and her hair and eyes—"

"Three lumps or four?" said his hostess, ignoring the answer.

Six months later Lois paused in the library doorway, her arms full of fresh spring blossoms, the strings of her garden bonnet untied in pretty confusion. There was a soft, rosy flush in the thin cheeks, and her blue eyes sparkled with animation. She tossed a tiny bunch of white violets into her mistress' lap.

"It's raining violets, as the song goes," she announced.

"Lovely things." Mrs. Austin stopped reading mail to hold them against her cheek. "You look like one yourself, Lois. Come inside, and tell me about them."

"They'll wilt if I don't put them in water—seems a shame to transplant them into vases, doesn't it?"

She sat down on a low stool and began sorting out the stems.

"Are you as happy as you look?" asked Mrs. Austin abruptly, her dark eyes searching the girl's face keenly.

"As happy? I'm so happy I'm afraid the spell must break," she said softly, the violets dropping from her eager fingers. "I'm so thankful, so grateful, that I can't stop singing your praises to myself. You've more than saved one girl I know about."

"Have I done that much? That is worth dying for," and the firm, pink hand reached down to pat the slender shoulders. "Have I really done that much?"

"And many times more. Before—when I was—you know—I was stifled with luxury. I had everything given me but knowledge. A soul, however smothered with indiscreet indulgences, cannot help feeling its own birth pangs. I'm still trying to find myself, Mrs. Austin; that is what it amounts to. I wake up in the night sometimes, and stretch out my hands in the blackness. I seem to be grasping for truth, for light, for strength. Sometimes I dream long, rambling nightmares, in which I'm

looking at my soul, crushed, and bleeding. One time—it was the first night I spent in your home—I woke up crying. I dreamed I was alone in the world, that no one cared. I tried to call out to people to stop and take pity on me, but they only laughed, and passed on. The scene shifted to a market place where people were buying and selling happiness. I tried to crawl to one of the booths to steal a stray crumb. But they drew away from me——”

The strong arms held her tenderly.

“Lois, is it hard to forget?”

“So hard. Sometimes I think the blotting out of the past is penance in itself. It is much easier to remember, to lean on what has happened as an ever-ready excuse. That is what makes the cripple an easy beggar and the convict a noteworthy convert. They wear their infirmities on their sleeve so the world can make exception for them.”

“But you have forgotten, Lois, you have?” A worried line showed in the high, white forehead.

“Oh, I shan’t tell you so unless it’s the truth,” she promised. “I’m happier than I have ever been in the world. Sometimes I can’t quite still the voice inside that asks if I should marry, and have children, and keep the other—secret.”

“You must, Lois, you must. That is part of your promise. That is——”

“I know, dear.” For the moment she seemed the older of the two. She rose, and put her arms about the white

neck. “I promised to do as you asked. Only you don’t know what it is to remember.”

Her eyes were shut, and the color had faded from her cheeks.

“I won’t have you bothered with nightmares; I won’t have it. You are as dear to me as my own child. There is so much I want to see you accomplish, so much happiness that I’ve determined shall be yours. You won’t disappoint me?”

“I won’t,” the girl said sturdily, picking up her violets.

The little housemaid handed in a telegram. Mrs. Austin tore it open nervously. Then she gave a glad cry.

“It’s from Don, my son Don, and he’s coming home. He never did get over having to be a way Christmas. He’s simply swept his work aside, and is coming. Lois, I’m as excited as a bride. We’ll decorate the rooms. I’ll tell Justice to make the old-fashioned drop cakes with pink frosting. I’ll wear that soft, red dress. Don called me the Rose Lady

in one some years ago. Will you telephone Doctor Gordon—tell him to meet Don at the seven o’clock Western express to-night?—come along to dinner, of course. I’m so happy I haven’t time to be mad at the Women’s League. I haven’t time to do a single thing except make myself beautiful.”

“Shall I—I—come down to dinner?” Lois hesitated before leaving the room.

“Of course. Don always wanted a sister. I’ve written all sorts of nice things about you, Miss Secretary. Wear



“What do you mean? What do you dare to mean?”

the white dress, and put some violets in your hair. We'll have a spring festival if we're not careful."

Turmoil reigned the rest of the day. Don's rooms were overhauled, and cleaned. Justice pressed into service her old cooking receipts, and appointed Lois chief critic and taster. Lois bustled about from room to room, placing the flowers in careless, dainty bunches. She helped comb the long gray-black hair, and coil it skillfully at the back of the white neck. She fastened a long, crimson rosebud in the folds of lace on the red gown. Then she hurried into her own dress, brushing the obstinate yellow curls carelessly.

Don was coming home! All the philanthropist was cast aside; only the mother remained to hold out her arms and clasp the big, sturdy man in them tenderly, laughing, crying all in one.

"Don, Don, *Don!*" For a minute she could not go on talking. "You've grown, you're thin. They don't care how hard you work on the stupid railroad. I don't care at all for experience. I say, they abuse you. Alan, don't stand there laughing at me. This is Lois, Don. You knew her beforehand. She's my right hand, my eyes, my ears, and keeper of my temper. Lois, this is Don. Oh, she's perfectly well aware of the fact that you're a spoiled, only son brought up by a well-intentioned but indulgent mother. Supper, Justice? We didn't plan a dinner, Don. An old-fashioned supper, with hot biscuits, and cold meats, and all kinds of jellies and cakes. All the cake you want, dear—"

This was a new Mrs. Austin who sat chatting excitedly to the sunburned young man on her right. The doctor smiled grimly as he noted that the boy's eyes wandered to the slender girl in white, in spite of his mother's exacting questioning. Lois, eating little, feeling out of place, and shy, avoided the steady look of the man's brown eyes—eyes like his mother. She would have preferred staying upstairs, letting their reunion be alone, unmarred by the presence of the most sympathetic of strangers.

By and by they went back to the drawing-room, and Lois found herself

at the piano. She struck the chords in an uncertain manner. Then the spirit of the little song took her out of herself, and she played and sang it unconscious of the others.

"It's wonderful," said Don softly. "Have you studied for long?"

Lois let her fingers crash discordantly on the keys.

"Not very," she answered simply, as she slipped away.

"Let's play chess," suggested the doctor shrewdly. "I've an idea you've lost your knack. It'll give your mother a chance to admire you uninterrupted."

Mrs. Austin blushed prettily.

"Don't let him bother you, Don," she said, laughing. "He makes me his target for every teasing mood that comes along."

"You're wanted at the telephone," said Justice stiffly. "It's Bess Blake."

"Excuse me, dears, for a minute," and the tall, gracious figure left the room.

"Is Bess Blake one of the mater's protégées?" demanded Don, his eyes looking over the doctor's grizzled head to Lois' golden curls.

"One of them—a prize one, I believe. They don't have her sort out in the Rockies, do they?"

Don laughed.

"I should say not. The nearest thing to a philanthropist is a well-aimed bullet. The mater would be a curiosity. She must be quite a revelation to you, Miss King," he added, turning to Lois. "Do you ever feel sure what unconventional, startling opinion of a problem she is going to seize upon?"

Lois smiled.

"Generally the right one, Mr. Austin."

A thoughtful look came into his face. "The mater has probably straightened out more tangles than we'll ever know," he said softly. "When you think of that, it isn't square to laugh at her failures. Only I can't help wishing that she wouldn't mix up in that kind of thing."

"Why?" asked the doctor.

"Because it isn't meant for women like mater. It's for women with short hair

and beaver hats, who want to charge about the town followed by a brigade of yellow journalists. And, as a whole, I don't believe it does her any good to meet the sort she does."

"Then you don't believe in complete change of heart, and that talk?"

"No, I don't," he answered shortly, annoyed that the subject had been spoken of so frankly in front of Lois.

"I see," mused the doctor, lifting his great, strong hand to stroke his thin face. "Play something else for us, Lois, will you?"

But Mrs. Austin swept back into the room.

"Bess is going to buy a piano," she announced triumphantly, "and I'm going to help pick it out. Don, you remember about Bess, don't you? The mill girl from the north end. She married a year ago, and they've done so well. Lois and I had tea with them last week. You ought to see their little home. And to buy a piano! I feel as if I ought to have a gold star on my napkin ring!"

"I don't remember," said her son indulgently, "but I'm terrifically glad. And I hope they select a bright red plush scarf, and a book of *Elite Dance Music* as premiums. Miss King is going to sing for us. Aren't you glad you're back?"

It was late when the doctor took his gnarled Scotch walking stick in his hand.

"Good-by, young man," he growled. "I'm not altogether sure if I do approve of hasty vacations. Come to lunch at the club to-morrow—half past one. Don't coddle him, Edith, a little privation is fine for the disposition. Tell Lois she is the most sensible of all—getting in her early beauty sleep. Good night."

"He's the greatest chap in the world," declared Don as they walked back to the library. "Greatest next to you. It does seem jolly to be home. Makes me forget camp fires, and tired surveying gangs, and sour-dough biscuits, and raw brandy. Oh, that's mild, mater. You'd have to have me hold your hand all night if I told you the worst. But it's living, it's really doing things."

"I'm so proud of you, Don," she said

softly, laying her head on his arm, "so proud of you. I'm proud for myself, too. I'm proud for your father's sake as well."

The boy dropped his pipe, and stroked the black-gray head tenderly.

"Where did you find Miss King?" he asked suddenly. "Isn't she pretty?"

"I'm glad you think so, Don. Lois is an orphan. She never knew her people. She went abroad with some—people—and when she came back she was ill. Doctor Gordon took care of her. She didn't want to go into an office again, and there wasn't anything else she was fitted for. So she came to me. I've wanted the right secretary for a long time."

"What did she do abroad—governess?"

"Yes—and secretary." His mother hurried over the words. "She seems happy with me. I'm very fond of her. She's as lovely as her face."

"And hasn't a soul in the world to call her own. What a pity."

"Oh, she doesn't feel lonesome any more; she sort of belongs to me."

"That's good," he said soberly, knocking his pipe against an ash stand. "I think I'll turn in, mater. Three days on the road make me loggy."

"Of course, dear, I forgot. It's so good to have you I don't think about anything else. Your rooms are ready. I've put Lois in the pink room at the head of the stairs. It seems like old times to have people under my roof."

They were going upstairs as she spoke, his arm about her waist.

"Mater, do you still mix up with that rough stuff—like Bess Blake?"

"As much as I can, Don." A spark of his own determination showed in her face as she lifted it for a good-night kiss. They were passing Lois' door.

"I don't like it," he declared boyishly. "You oughtn't to know about such things. Neither had she."

She patted his tanned cheeks gently.

"Don, dear, it's the not-knowing and the not-wanting-to-know people that keep suffering at a tension. It hasn't hurt me to know such things. Really,

truly. And I'm coming out soon to see you in a blue shirt and a cowboy hat."

Don's month at home vanished before Justice half exhausted her round of his favorite dishes. The doctor protested that his practice was going to ruin because of a certain young and athletic chap who camped outside his doorstep every morning, holding a set of golf sticks and giving orders to a pair of dirty-faced, sleepy caddies. Mrs. Austin missed two board meetings of the Animals' Rescue Mission, and was out when delegations from various charities called persistently. Lois grew strangely gay and light-hearted, played and sang without being coaxed, and found herself forgetting to shiver when Don would ask her about European cities.

A week before he was to leave Mrs. Austin found Lois tearing up letters in her room. She stopped with a guilty gesture as the older woman entered.

"Lois, it isn't any of my affair——"

"Oh, yes it is. I had kept just a few of them," she confessed. "It seemed to be easier than to tear them up. I used to keep them to make me suffer. I used to get up in the night, and read them over and over. But it's different now." She swept aside the finely torn bits.

"Then you truly have forgotten?"

"I truly have," Lois said simply.

She gave a happy sob as the firm arms caught her warmly.

"Don wants you," said Mrs. Austin a moment later. "He claims you have basely deserted him, told him you'd show him something or other in the barn."

"So I did!" she exclaimed, jumping up and smoothing down her dress. "I told him I'd show him the remnants of his boyhood. I came across all the funny, homemade piratical weapons he had stowed away in the loft. You must see them. Bows and arrows, cross swords, and a wooden pistol with a terrifying number of triggers. He said they had formed a juvenile robbers' club which you discovered and boy-cotted."

"I remember something about it. Run along, and don't keep him waiting. I'm coming out presently."

She watched the girl as she ran down the steps.

"Don has his sister," she told herself contentedly, "and Lois has forgotten."

The night before Don was to leave there was a dinner party. At first a few of the old friends were to share the fun, but by and by the guests were sifted down to the doctor and Mrs. Austin, Don and Lois.

"We're selfish," admitted Don's mother complacently, "and we know it. We want to be selfish, don't we?"

"Unanimously—yes," answered Don loudly.

A little before dinner Mrs. Austin came out of the dining room with a satisfied smile. The best silver, the whitest damask, the choicest garden flowers had been pressed into service. Don's favorite dishes had been worried over by Justice, and the doctor tramped the city to find a certain rare edition of a book Don wanted to take away with him.

Lois came into the library to find Don's mother bending over a little jewel case studiously.

"You're not interrupting," she said. "Come here and look at these pearls. My husband gave them to me on my wedding day. The setting is a little old-fashioned. But I wouldn't want them changed. I'm putting them away for Don's wife. Don't you think it's a pretty idea? I'm going to give them to her for an engagement present. It's time Don was thinking of marriage. I'm hungry for grandchildren."

Her firm, pink fingers played with the long, white strands as she spoke.

Lois put out her hand timidly.

"Mrs. Austin, I've come to tell you something—something that I hope will make you happy. I told you a little while ago that I had forgotten about—everything. Just as you wanted me to. You made me promise when I came here that I would think of myself as other girls think of themselves, looking forward to marriage. Mrs. Austin, Don and I love each other. He asked me to marry him this morning."

The pink fingers crushed the string of pearls. She looked at the slender,



"What would you have me do, Alan?" she asked in a broken voice.

wistful girl with a strange, new expression. Lois had never seen her dark eyes so cruel.

"What do you mean?" she asked in a low, suppressed voice. "What do you dare to mean?"

"I thought—you—would—be—glad," Lois faltered. "You said you loved me as if I belonged to you—that you wanted me to—"

"Marry? Yes. Some man that would be suitable." Her voice took on a louder, angry tone. "But not my son! Not my Don! That can *not* be. It is something which I never dreamed of. I've been blind, blind. No, not my boy. He is worth some young, flowery girl, whose first love thoughts are told her by the wakening look in his own pure eyes. Not you, Lois, you pitiful, marred play-

thing of tragedy. Ah, you won't, will you? Promise me."

She had risen, holding out the string of pearls in her hand.

Lois drew back.

"Then you did not mean what you told me," she said quietly. "You are like all the others. As soon as it threatens to touch you personally, you take away your other promises. You told me to forget, to forget to my own soul what happened—and it wasn't my fault, you know that. You told me—"

"Do you want money to go away with? I'll give you anything in the world except my son. I tell you that cannot be."

"Money?" The girl's blue eyes filled with quick tears. "Is it because of money that you—"

"Money doesn't care to whom it belongs. It isn't because of poverty that I think twice. It's honor, Lois, the finest, strongest, most enduring thing in the world. Honor. Honor does care who calls it theirs. Lois, you don't think

I'm cruel, you don't think—"

"I don't know what to think," said the girl in a weary, hopeless voice.

"You must tell Don you don't love him," the woman added, with a savage force. "You must not let him care any longer."

Lois smiled.

"You were not meant to be a philanthropist," she told her. "You were meant to be only a mother."

"Lois, don't hate me for this." The string of pearls dropped unheeded to the floor. "It isn't that I'm angry at you; it isn't that, dear, only Don is different. When you have a son you'll understand. He's all that is really mine, and I want the purest, sweetest girl in the world for him. I've dreamed about that girl, Lois. I've dreamed about

their children. Not you. It cannot be."

"Doctor Gordon," announced the little housemaid.

"Lois, go upstairs; don't go to Don until after dinner—promise me you won't. You owe me that much." The last slipped out unconsciously.

"I promise," said the girl monotonously. "I'll go away, if you say. I've been housed, and fed, and taken care of until I'm strong enough to go out alone and not slip. I'll go away, Mrs. Austin. I'd just as soon. It was all a mistake."

"Lois," she began tenderly, but the girl had left the room.

The doctor stood before her, watching her quivering, distorted face.

"What is it?" he asked abruptly.

"Don has asked Lois to marry him," she said slowly.

Then she buried her head in her arms, sobbing like a child.

"Shall we turn the dinner into an engagement announcement?"

The black-gray head was lifted.

"You can speak—like that?"

"Why not?" he said seriously. "You must have seen this coming. Have you been blind?"

"I never dreamed of such a possibility. Not Don!"

"And why not Don? Surely he's not an ineligible."

She faced him indignantly. All the fury of a mother lion protecting her cub was suggestive of her manner.

"You think I will stand by with sealed lips and let my son marry the cast-off mistress of—"

"Ssh!" he stopped her quickly. "So Lois is your measuring stick! It had to come, it was bound to come, Edith. Sooner or later."

"What do you mean?" Her lips quivered with fury.

"Remember when you took Lois into your home a few months ago, when you made her promise to forget the past, when you told her she must be like other girls, when you pledged your never-failing help, I asked you then how strongly you believed your own broad, generous theories. Edith, if this hurts you to

listen, it hurts me first to tell you. But it had to come. I knew when I saw the girl that some unexpected outcome was inevitable. She was different. She was an exception. An exception who always suffers when pushed under the binding consequences of the general rule. And Don is of no finer clay than other mothers' sons. He is worthy of Lois. Don't flinch. He is worthy of Lois—and no more.

"Oh, you dreamers, you theorizers, you philanthropists! You go about with deaf ears and closed eyes. You will not measure your theories, you will not know their strength, and depth. Do you believe the cant you've preached to that heartsick, patient child? Not a word of it. If you do, why hesitate to give her to your son, your first born? Could any pledge of your sincerity be greater than that? But what do you do? You turn in rage and fight to push her back into the mire rather than let her work out her salvation by the life help of your own flesh and blood. Every bit of fine conceit in you rebels, Edith; every atom of motherhood crowds back your abortive tendency to reform. You haven't told Don about Lois. You're determining now to tell him, and let him decide. That's the woman of it. You know that Don, like most inexperienced, narrow men, will hold up his hands in masculine horror. You know what Lois will do. Go away; she'll hide like some trapped animal that has managed to crawl out of the cage, bleeding, maimed. And you will be glad of it. Oh, yes, you will. You'd sacrifice a hundred girls like Lois in order to 'save' your son. Although you've planned, and worked, and prayed to give this girl to some other woman's first born. Lois is your measuring stick! I knew it."

He tramped up and down the room. She watched him in angered, cowed silence. This was a new Alan speaking to her. By and by he burst out:

"You wouldn't send her to Sunnyfield like the average woman, who is kinder of heart in the ultimate. You took her into your family, you made her one of you, you deluged her with kindness, with apparent sincerity. And because the

most natural, logical thing in the world happens, you turn upon her with the same sick fury that a leper missionary shows when he finds himself inoculated with the poison. Edith, you've lied to yourself!"

She stooped and picked up the string of pearls in silence. Something in the mute gesture of despair made the doctor's kindly face twitch. He came close to her, and put his strong hands on her shoulder.

"Years ago, Edith, when Don was a fatherless little chap, I told you he needed a man to help bring him up. True, I used the argument to ask you to be my wife, but I believed it in spite of the personal motive. If Don had had a father, this would not have happened. Lois would not have come here. Women have no right to be quixotic. That is meant for men. After all, dear, it's the same cold, hard, logical boards of directors and noninterested committees that deal best with the tangles. All these years I've stood by, loving and wanting you, and being sent away with the excuse that you had your work to do—and I've known that some day one of your tame tiger cubs would taste raw meat!"

"What would you have me do, Alan?" she asked in a broken voice.

"Make the best of it. You, and Lois, and I know that you did not mean what you told her. Somehow I can't help but think of you as the finer mother because of it. It's the remnant of the old idea about a woman behind convent walls, looking up with shocked, startled eyes at her first sight of a Crusader scaling them. We all come back to it, sooner or later. But Don doesn't know. And Don must never know. As for Lois, her future is more in the balance now than it was when she came here, wet and hungry. You'll send her soul to black despair. Before it was only her body that suffered."

"See, these were for Don's wife," she said, the tears falling quickly. "Pearls—for purity. And she came in here and found me putting them away. I was going to tell Don to-night about them, and ask if he had begun to plan—"

She buried her face in the broad shoulder. "Alan, I cannot, I cannot!"

"You must," he said firmly. "You, who talk of standing the failure of your theories. Edith, you're as adorably narrow as the woman at the League Workers' who longs to challenge you to mortal combat. And you've always led a sheltered, protected life. You mustn't let Lois go away; she must marry Don."

"No, no, no!" She struggled as if some one were trying to hold her by force. "No, I tell you! That is—different."

"There is another side," he said cautiously. "There is Don's side. Are you fair to him?"

"What do you mean?"

"Don must not have his heart broken young. True, men don't die of broken hearts. They usually take to drink or something equally as interesting. Your son is going back to a rough camp of men, men coming from every sort of environment. He is going back, we'll suppose, with the happiness of a newly accepted lover. That'll keep a man straight in hell, Edith."

She looked at him with a bewildered, weakening expression.

"Will it, Alan?"

"There is nothing like first love, the first spontaneous, carefree love of youth for youth. Don't take Don's away from him. Don't send him back to careless men and careless lives with the broken despair of a disillusioned lover. Make the sacrifice of your feelings for your boy. Be big enough to suffer silently."

"To hurt Don—I never thought of that."

"You must think," he said soberly. "You must listen to sane reason. Your sacrifice for Don is the biggest sacrifice a mother can make."

"Their children? I tell you I cannot love them."

"Don's children?" He stroked her hair like a child. "Edith, you'll forget Don himself when you hold his son in your arms."

The dinner gong sounded. They heard Don's step in the garden, waiting impatiently until Lois came to tell him she had broken the silence of their

blessed secret. Upstairs a door was softly opened, but no one came out of it.

The doctor laid the old-fashioned string of wedding pearls in her unwilling hands.

"She is waiting up there," he said. "Be brave and of good courage."

Obediently the tall, gracious figure mounted the steps, her head bent in resignation, her hands clasping the necklace tenderly. Lois was standing in the threshold of the pink room. Her face was white, as if she had been ill for a long time.

"I'll go," she began quickly. "I'll do just what you tell me to—no matter what. I'd rather tell Don myself. I'll tell him everything. It'd be easier for me to have him know. And then I'll go away. You see, it's so hard—to remember again."

Don's mother stared at her curiously. Lois seemed like some impudent stranger who had found her way beneath their roof. Then the old womanly feeling for the weaker, younger girl returned. The eternal sympathy of sex replaced the repellent, questioning emotion. In the girl's dazed eyes she could read the newly born adoration for her son, a mutual, all-absorbing love for the boy who waited below in ignorance. The spark of mother conceit was fanned by the light of unselfish worship. She need never fear but what Lois would

be an equal partner in the yoke, that she would do her share of the hill climbing.

Lois loved Don. And it was she who purged the girl's heart that she might love some man as good as Don. Don loved Lois. After all, it was very simple. The meaning of the ardor in his brown eyes was clear to her now. Her boy must never know. He must never lose that first, decisive ideal which proud youth discovers, and holds up for the world's approbation. She must spare him that!

She threw the string of pearls about the girl's slender neck.

"We must never let Don know," she said simply. "He is waiting for you—down there."

She turned aside as the girl obediently started down the south staircase, her hands caressing the white, sweet string.

Some one drew the mother gently away.

It was the doctor, smiling tenderly.

"Alan, mothers *suffer* so," she said brokenly. "I'm tired, I'm defeated."

"It's a habit God gives them," he answered reverently.

He drew a quaint seal ring from his little finger. She blushed in the dusk of the hall as he held it out to her timidly. He had worn that ring for many years in patient waiting. Instinctively, she laid her long, fragrant fingers in his.



Song

HOW slow of foot the moments are
When you, beloved, are not nigh!
Laboriously they crawl and crawl
As doth the shadow on the wall
When the bright sun is avatar
Within the midday sky.

But when, beloved, you are near
The moments are like winged things;
They are as birds that dip and dart
Across the blue that has no chart;
And how, like them, with golden cheer,
The heart within me sings!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

A STRANGER WITHIN THE GATES

BY

EMMA LEE WALTON

Author of "The Twig," "An Architect of Fate," etc



ILLUSTRATED BY
WARREN V. CLUFF

JIMMIE knew him as soon as he laid eyes on him as "the stranger that is within thy gates," and he was a Sabbath-breaking heathen sinner, as all strangers are until you know them. Jimmie knew there were prizes offered those who brought outsiders to Sunday school, red buttons for boys, blue ones for girls, and he marked the stranger as his own. The boy was two years his senior, a dashing youth with a charming swagger that Jimmie resolved to imitate when alone. He decided suddenly to "brace in."

"Hello!" he began tentatively, watching the boy slash a puddle with a switch. "That puddle never dries up."

"Hello yourself!" the stranger retorted coldly. "What if it don't?"

Jimmie was not encouraged, for of a sudden the boy looked very large, and sort of swelled up; but strangers were not numerous in Preston, and he could not let this one slip through his fingers.

"You're new, aren't you?" he asked, a loud voice covering his timidity. "Live in Pierpont's house, don't you?"

The stranger stopped switching the puddle, and eyed Jimmie from top to toe.

"Well," he drawled, "what if I do?"

"Oh, nothing," Jimmie replied hastily.

"I thought maybe you were lonesome, being new."

"I'd rather be new than too fresh, and if I was lonesome I'd pick my own

comp'ny," the stranger said crushingly. "I ain't uset to playing with any four-year-old kids."

The insult sank deep, and the angry tears rose in Jimmie's eyes, to be winked back instantly, because he remembered that a heathen always acted, as a matter of course, like a heathen.

"I'm seven," Jimmie said tremulously. "I'm in Miss Wilson's own class in Sunday school, and there ain't but one higher in prim'ry."

The stranger indulged in a long fit of laughter that seemed the more outrageous because it was noiseless. Jimmie flushed hot. Persecution for righteousness' sake was not unknown to him.

"It ain't so funny," he retorted. "All the fellers that's anybody goes. We have a C'ristmus tree, and a picnic, and birthdays, and new babies, and behaving cards, and we smash the jug with a hammer when it's full. Miss Wilson's father was in the Revolution, and Billy goes, and Kath'rin' Potter. It's because you're new that you don't know things."

The stranger's indifference was marked, overdone, though Jimmie did not know it. He whistled as he gazed down the street, and then yawned idly.

"It don't cut any ice with me what you got," he said, at length. "And what do I care who goes?"

"You ain't come just this minute," Jimmie urged. "You must 'a' seen Billy. Why, he can stand on his head 'thout



Jimmie hoped with all his soul that he was the only one who heard the stranger's words.

a wall! And Kath'rin'—why, Kath'rin' lives on your street. She's got yellow curls, and she looks——"

"I know—like a fairy," the stranger helped unexpectedly. "Does she go every Sunday?"

"Sure! Her father's a doctor, and he don't dast to go away even summers for fear things'll happen. You know—dyings and borns. And Billy—he comes when there ain't anything else doing."

"This town is fierce!" the stranger declared gloomily. "There ain't ever anything doing. I might's well go along if you'll whistle for me Sunday. Mind, I

fiction," she observed, in a low voice. "Chauncey, junior, I thought not one to be attracted by our simple ways. Now, James, if you will ask Miss Jennie for your button, you may take your seat over in my class. Your friend ought to be in the class ahead of you."

The stranger would not change his seat next to Kath'rin' Potter, and Miss Wilson said he might remain there "for the present," thus avoiding a protest from Jimmie, whose place it was. The hour, progressing, showed forth the stranger a star, indeed, and Jimmie shone by reflected light. The stranger

don't say I'll go; but I might. So long."

The advent of the stranger made an excitement fully up to Jimmie's expectations.

He was stunningly garbed, and his aunt's bottle of violet water had made him noticeable anywhere. Jimmie had an idea the stranger had dressed himself, but he could not tell how he got the impression. Miss Wilson greeted him kindly, but seemed tired when she spoke to the young lady at the piano.

"I had hoped to escape the in-

knew who Samson was—his father had known him well when he was a boy—and when Miss Wilson spoke of heaven the stranger remarked carelessly that he "heard all over town it was a very pleasant place to go." Jimmie admired his self-possession, and even forgave him for taking his seat when he found he had had a birthday the preceding week.

To have had a birthday was a great thing, for Miss Wilson stood a birthday child on a little stool in sight of the whole roomful, while all the other children spoke a greeting in chorus. Jimmie was proud that the new boy belonged to him as he listened.

"For twelve long years, through sickness and in health, God has kept our little friend Michael, and we hope He will keep him many years longer, happy and well."

Miss Wilson stooped to whisper to the young lady at the piano:

"He doesn't look a day over eight," and then announced with enthusiasm that they would sing "Precious Jewels."

The stranger did not know the words, but sang with vigor nevertheless. Jimmie hoped with all his soul that he was the only one who heard that the stranger's words were taken from "My Wife's Gone to the Country."

It was at this time that Jimmie began to wonder whether he had done wisely or had merely succeeded in introducing a serpent into his Eden. When the stranger announced that his name was Mike there was a wicked gleam in his eye that seemed to escape the notice of the usually vigilant Miss Wilson. Jimmie wondered whether Mrs. Pierpont's nephew would be named Mike when she herself wore silk and rode in a limousine. From the moment the final chorus of "Precious Jewels" sounded forth Jimmie was sure he had made a mistake. It was then that Katherine Potter gave the stranger, to whom she had been whispering, her behaving card that had forget-me-nots on. Jimmie frowned darkly.

"Marie has a new little sister at her house," Miss Wilson announced smilingly. "So let's all stand up and tell

her we are glad. What is it, Ch—Michael?"

"We got new ones to our house, too," the stranger announced glibly. "Twins. One's a boy and one's a girl. So they better stand up for me, too."

The young lady at the piano choked, and had to go get a drink of water. Jimmie's face was very red, and he would not stand up, in spite of urging, though he knew he was thereby losing his behaving card. He did not mind such small things now; and, anyhow, Katherine was not going to have one, either.

"Think you'd be 'shamed," Katherine whispered to him. "And your friend, too! It's being stingy."

Thereafter she would not speak to Jimmie, and his cup of bitterness was full to overflowing.

"I seen moving pictures of the Chronicle Son," the stranger announced in the middle of the lesson, when they were supposed to be quiet. "And onct there was a circus parade, and my father was to 'a' been mayor, only he died two years ago, when I was only seven. I'm a orphan."

"Yes, it's too bad," Miss Wilson agreed, smiling. "Now, when the Philistines were coming who knows what Samson did?"

"I know," the stranger said scornfully. "Took twenty-three eggs, and beat it! That's easy. Ask me something hard."

Of what use was it to be a well-behaved, reasonably truthful boy, possessed of a five-bladed knife and patent-leather shoes? The stranger's daring and bold defiance of the rules and regulations had won Katherine Potter's gentle heart, and the least observant among men might easily note that she had eyes for no one else. When they sang "Little Builders All Are We," Katherine giggled with the stranger, and encouraged him to sing louder the strains of a song that stated his fear of going home in the dark. Jimmie was in terror lest Miss Wilson should hear. His red button, so newly acquired, would be sadly jeopardized if it had been won for him by an undesirable new scholar.

The new boys and girls that others had brought in had been so quietly demure.

"We'll put up with it for to-day," Miss Wilson whispered to the young lady at the piano. "Mrs. Pierpont's sister will want him to go to the Episcopal Sunday school, I'm sure. I do wish, though, that he did not demoralize the whole room. Even that sweet little Potter girl is acting as though she were possessed. The boys in Jennie's class won't even listen to her. What is it, Michael?"

"I just found out you say birthday verses for family, too," the stranger declared, aggrieved. "My mother was seventeen on Thursday, so you gotter let me stand up and be spoken at again."

Miss Wilson glanced at the other teachers questioningly, and received several wireless messages. Sympathy was so plainly shown by the other members of the primary department that Miss Wilson, for the sake of peace, had the verse said over again, her own voice trembling oddly in the repetition.

"My mother," the boy announced from his prominent post, "has yellow curls, too, and she says she ain't going to stay in town another summer, even if things has gone up."

Miss Wilson motioned him to his seat sternly, and proceeded with the exercises. The collection must be taken up. Jimmie knew without raising his eyes who had seized the little gold-and-white dish to pass it around for pennies for the jug. He knew, too, who pocketed some of the pennies when Miss Wilson's back was turned. Etiquette required silence, but though Jimmie knew what was due a friend he longed to rise in his seat and disclaim responsibility. He was glad Katherine Potter had not seen—it was too awful. Momentarily he expected divine interposition in the form of lightning to strike the stranger down—a punishment that might justly



Miss Wilson separated the two.

include his sponsor. Jimmie was sick with the misery of it.

"Marie'd oughter give a reception party," the stranger said to Katherine, in a very audible whisper. "So's her dress'll meet her stockings! There's a hole in Billy's stocking. Hi!"

"Ain't, neither!" growled Billy. "Cut it out; do you hear?"

"Is, too—is, too!" hooted the stranger. "At the top! Did y'ever get stung?"

"Be quiet now, Michael," Miss Wilson said firmly. "We're going to say our little prayer. Heads bowed, children."

Jimmie, peering out through his fingers—the behaving card was lost, anyhow—heard no word of the familiar prayer, for he was watching the stranger in breathless horror. The new boy was polishing his shoes with one of Hattie Forest's hair ribbons stolen for the purpose. Hattie was far from meek, and Jimmie was not surprised to have a storm burst forth as soon as the "amen" had left her lips.

When Miss Wilson had separated the two, and the stranger was stood up behind the piano, peace reigned, even in Jimmie's heart. To relieve his overcharged feelings, he drummed on the floor with his feet, and pretended he did not see Katherine's smile that followed her shocked realization of the stranger's atrocious conduct. The smile was directed Jimmie's way, but he could afford to wait.

The young lady at the piano was having trouble playing the final hymn, so they sang it without the music, and then noisily gathered up their hats and behaving cards with as little altercation as possible regarding their ownership.

Jimmie waited, with Billy and some others, to see what might happen to the stranger behind the piano.

"There were three hymn books inside the piano," the indignant young lady told Miss Wilson. "No wonder it would not work."

"Really," Miss Wilson told him, "we cannot have such actions as these. If you are going to behave like that you cannot come again."

The stranger grinned.

"I don't spect to," he said blithely, smiling across at the wavering Katherine. "We're going back to Brooklyn to-morrow."

"Let him go," said the young lady. "Good riddance! No more Chauncey Pierponts for us."

Jimmie listened with blazing cheeks, unconscious of the fact that Katherine had come close beside him. With unsteady fingers, he pulled the coveted red button from his coat, and laid it in Miss Wilson's hand.

"It ain't really mine," he shakily declared. "He ain't coming steady, and—I and I wish I'd never brought him. He's something fierce!"

He turned away, but his departure was arrested by the stranger's voice in an awful exclamation:

"Well, what the devil do you know about that?"

In a church!

For one moment horror made them dumb, and then the lightning struck. Dimpled, fluffy little Katherine Potter, her curly head held high, turned on her heel.

"Come on, M'rie," she said wittingly. "Le's go home. Boys are all wicked or friends of wicked."



LEADING THE BLIND



BY
MRS.
RAYMOND
PATTERSON

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK J. MURCH

DEAR BAB: When I ask a perfectly simple and pertinent question about you and Ivan Bryce, I do not enjoy six pages on the beauty of nature in reply. It has taken months to bring myself to that delicate point of courage where all curiosity was eliminated, and only the deepest concern for the happiness of two old friends impelled the question. "Whatever happened," I ask, "that sent Ivan packing off to Europe and threw you into a state of well-bred, conservative hysteria?" You answer with a fine literary effort on the tricks of gulls, and the insinuating, seductive odor of the pogonias in the lush places back of the cottage.

Now, I have seen gulls dive for fish, and I've gathered pogonias, and had a snake rise to greet me from out the lush, showing its nasty tongue, and I, also, have thrilled and thrilled over the thrush's song, but I want to know what the trouble is between you and Ivan Bryce. I, too, had a heartache, once. Do you remember that silly Marcia Mason? Ah, what a turn she gave me when I fancied Ted was really taking her seriously! But I didn't let him get as far as Europe, and I am very much afraid you have been unwise in this affair of yours if you have allowed Evelyn Stokes to come between you. Or was it Paul Stetson? Come, Bab. You've carried things off very well, but it will do you a lot of good if you open your heart to me with the truth. I do not want any rhapsody on the sea or any poem on the pines, although I know you could do

both beautifully. I want you to answer my question in plain English.

Faithfully your true friend,

MABEL HOUSTON.

P. S.—It is so perfectly foolish to allow a lovers' quarrel go as far as Europe! Cherrydale, August second.

Barbara Woodson folded the letter, and stuck it back into the pocket of her middy blouse. She had read it over three times since bringing home the noon post, yet she sighed just as deeply after the third careful and deliberate perusal as she did upon the first hasty glance at its pages over at the post office. Now, she sat upon the topmost step of the piazza, musing; and beside her sat Benjamin, just as snug-up as he could shift, sharing her mood as sympathetically as his little dog soul understood the situation.

He knew, as well as Barbara, that they two were the only signs of life on that side of the cove, and that it was desperately quiet because everybody had gone off on sailing parties—the day being wonderful and the water alluring. To be sure, they had been invited, even urged to go, too; but Barbara pleaded

letters to write, and inasmuch as Benjamin insisted upon standing on the stern, and barking at the exhaust, he alone was never made to go upon the launch simply for the pleasure of his company.

The day dragged. Barbara had written no letters, and her thoughts trailed along unhappy avenues opened by this one just received from Mabel Houston. Benjamin could not be cheerful under these solemn circumstances, and wondered why he had not been clever enough to jerk that dreadful letter away from her and tear it to bits. He had done such things often, and they all laughed at him. He rolled his eyes in the direction of Barbara's pocket, and suddenly sprang for the corner of something white. It was only her handkerchief, and when he started to run with it she did not laugh at all; she was vexed, and scolded him, and so he dropped it immediately. One never knows when people are going to play fair. Slowly he climbed the steps again, and sat down, staring at the sea sadly, and, with a whine, shifting a bit closer to Barbara. It seems she wanted the handkerchief, really needed it for her eyes, and this made Benjamin so utterly wretched he could only reach up and lick her pink ear, begging her not to cry, please!

"Do—do you want to walk?" she asked him from behind the handkerchief.

He jumped to his feet, pricked up his shy white ear, and the brave brown ear, quivered the stub of a tail, and panted excitedly.

"Just the thing!" he was saying. "Nothing could be better for both of us!"

"Very well, we'll walk!" Barbara told him, as she took the leash from the hammock hook.

Now, very early in Benjamin's career he decided in his quick fox terrier mind that when Barbara snapped the leash in his collar she was practically asking him to lead her. He was always flattered, and took the leash in his teeth as greedily as though it were a bone, and started off with proud, important steps.

To be sure, he dropped the leash, as well as his responsibility, when he passed Sarah Louise Manners' chickens. But that was entirely the chickens' fault. They always stood in the middle of the path, noisily daring him to come on, and he was obliged to pull and jerk Barbara until her feet barely touched the ground. Upon one tragic occasion she had to pay for a fussy old hen, and hear Benjamin abused, with indirect aspersions cast at people who pet dogs.

To-day she was too spiritless to tempt fate or Sarah Louise, or any fussy old hen, and turned from the hard-beaten path past the chickens' compound to go through the woods, across the meadow, and out onto the river road.

To-day they were quite alone, they two, and Barbara talked to him.

"Now, please, Benjie boy, don't go so fast!" Benjamin dropped back a step or two, and wiggle-waggled close beside her delightedly.

"That's a good doggie. He's leading an old blind lady, like a nice, little Sunday-school dog, and he must be very gentle and careful. Heigh-o, that's perfectly true, Benjie. I'm blind, and I wish I were old!"

Never before in all of his life had he been so shocked as he was at that moment, when Barbara jerked him angrily. He stopped suddenly, and looked up inquiringly. She did not even see him as she pulled him forward without apology.

"That's perfectly true," she said; "perfectly true! Blind"—jerk—"blind"—jerk—"blind!"—an awful jerk, whereupon Benjamin decided this sort of thing was not to be borne, and he flattened himself out in the path, and laid back his ears. There was no use going on at this rate. He came out to banish care, whereas he was feeling worse than ever. He strained at his leash until his collar all but slipped over his ears, and Barbara turned.

"Oh, forgive me, and come on, old boy!" she said, stooping to pat his head.

Instantly Benjamin frisked all over the path. He always went more than halfway when some one apologized, and, after all, a few jerks more or less did

not matter. Undoubtedly, that letter was at the bottom of it all, and he was to blame because he did not tear it to bits.

"And when I really think about it, Benjie," Barbara explained more cheerfully, "I'm a beggar, too—a blind beggar lady! I shall tie a little tin cup to your collar, doggins, and we'll sit by the roadside on a hard, cold stone, and people will read your card: 'Please help the blind and hungry.' Would you like a little tin cup tied to your collar, Benjie?"

Benjamin was sure he liked the idea immensely, and dashed ahead in his eagerness to look for tin cups.

"Now, see here, Benjie dog, if we play blind and hungry don't you jerk me again like that!"

Benjamin apologized for his suddenness, and dropped the leash to take the hem of her skirt in his mouth and carry it, like a page, to prove his utter devotion.

"And listen, Benjamin!" Barbara stooped in the path and put her arms about his neck, to whisper confidentially: "Listen! If a big, tall man passes, and drops a rare gold piece in your cup, you must not lose it!" The shy white ear and the brave brown ear were alert, catching every word. "You must not lose it, oh, not for the world! Because we'd never be blind or hungry or wretched again if you hold the gold piece very carefully in your cup, and—you'll have the biggest bones——"

Bones? Bones? Did she say bones? Where did he bury that last one? He wheeled suddenly to go back and see if it was quite safe under the piazza. But Barbara urged him on.

"That big, tall man stopped once," she said softly, "and I let the gold piece slip through my fingers to the ground—and he picked it up, and went away. He's been gone so long, Benjie dog, so long!"

Benjamin went perfectly limp with sorrow; he flattened his ears and hung his head; he was heartbroken.

"So you'll be careful, won't you, Benjie?"

Benjamin perked up instantly, and promised.

"If he should come our way you'll know him by his eyes—great, wise, brown ones that go angry or tender or teasing."

They had come suddenly upon a great patch of blueberries.

"Benjamin Franklin Woodson! Would you believe it? Millions of them!"

Benjamin believed it, and was enchanted. Barbara let him off the leash, and they ate their way through the patch, Benjamin with more haste than discretion.

Before they crossed the stile at the other side of the meadow, Benjamin had raced over the distance, back and forth, many times, and now, to recover his breath, panted along contentedly by Barbara's side as they came out on the river road.

It was a winding highway, hedged with blackberry vines, sweetbrier, and elder, yet so narrow that teams passing each other must drive into the stony ditch to avoid locking wheels. On one side rose Star Point, a steep and rocky hill, set thick with giant pines, green-plumed, protecting; on the other side a broad meadow sloped softly to the river, where it widened into the sea. On the water's edge was a solitary tent; and on the highest point of the hill stood a cottage in process of building, which had been the subject of conjecture when other topics lagged, because until now no one seemed to know for whom it was designed. During the last week, however, the man who distributed vegetables and collected gossip spread the news that the owner of the house on the hill was camping in the tent by the river; he had come on to direct the staining and finishing of his cottage.

In none of this was Barbara particularly interested beyond thinking, as she looked, how wonderfully the house was placed, and how perfectly it seemed to be a part of the hill itself. It was stained pine-green, and the great chimney at one end was made of rocks taken from the hillside, as also were the pillars of the broad piazza.

In none of this was Benjamin in the least interested. He gave himself up to



Benjamin, goaded with rage and wild with indignation, made quick, frenzied jumps at the beast.

Frank J. Church.

the serious business of keeping some point of the leash firmly fixed between his teeth and conducting Barbara safely along the road with conscious responsibility.

Suddenly he stopped, jumped, and doubled back on his leash. A large red cow filled the roadway. She rolled and rolled her big, loose eyes at Benjamin, and moved her awful mouth about, threatening to eat him. One horn had been broken—undoubtedly in some attack on a dog, Benjamin knew—and it was bound with a rag; the other was enormous, outcurving, and sharp. Worse than all else, the creature had a large wooden arrangement hanging about its neck mysteriously. Was it to catch dogs? Benjamin braced himself against the road. Barbara hated cows, too, and he knew it. She held the leash firmly as Benjamin, standing close beside her, barked every kind of a bark that he knew, and then improvised with variations.

The cow never stirred, nor did she give a sign that she heard. It was the subtlety of a villain. It was maddening. Benjamin, goaded with rage and wild with indignation, made quick, frenzied jumps at the beast, that stood with lowering head moving that awful mouth around and around.

Barbara reasoned with Benjamin.

"Oh, come on!" with a tug at the leash. "Never mind the thing! We'll go off here to the side of the horrid brute, and give it the road!"

She skirted the bushes and briers, picking her way carefully, watching

the broad, even-breathing flanks of the cow, and dragging Benjamin, who, with every step, made little dabs of jumps at the contemptible coward, flinging his hate in spiteful yelps.

They were all but safely passed when the crisis came with shocking suddenness. Without turning her head, or shifting a hoof, the cow gave forth one long, rumbling bellow, that trailed off into a wail, like the anguish of howling wind on a haunted hill.

Barbara screamed, and Benjamin yelped sharply, as though he had been struck with a stone. There was no time to be lost. They would both be snatched up in that trap swinging on the cow's neck, and Benjamin leaped into the road, and ran like a streak. It was only for an instant that Barbara could keep up with him, and when he turned, tearing up the steep hill, he jerked the leash quite out of her hand, and left her panting by the roadside.

"Benjamin!" she called, in a thin,

breathless voice. "Benjamin! You naughty dog—come here to me this minute!"

But Benjamin, all unheeding, leaped frantically, madly farther up the hill.

"Benjie!" she tried cajolingly. "Benjie, come back! The horrid thing won't hurt you."

Her voice could not possibly reach Benjamin now, either with angry threat or tender appeal, as he had disappeared behind the house on the top of the hill.

Barbara glanced behind her apprehensively; the cow, still filling the highway, was slowly plodding along toward the bend in the road, and Barbara never moved until the great, ungainly figure was lost to sight in the turning. Then she looked about for a path. None had been broken, and she needs must climb in the soft, muddy wagon tracks that wound the longest way around to the tip of Star Point.

At the steps of the cottage she stopped and called. No dog appeared. Acutely conscious of invading, she called again, timidly and without moving. By this time Benjamin had explored the house quite to his satisfaction, scratching about in the dust and shavings for mice, and now came to the window frame, standing with his paws on the sill, looking out for Barbara, wondering why it took her forever to get up that hill.

When he saw her at the foot of the steps he was wild with delight, grinning and panting in his impatience to show her this bully house he had found. He had no notion of coming out. She went up to the window, and insisted. When she leaned over the sill, and lunged for the leash, he jumped back quickly, just escaping her hand. It was a good game, far nicer than walking. Barbara sat down on the window sill, to consider the situation. Benjamin begged her, by every trick he knew, to jump in and hunt mice with him. When for some unaccountable reason she refused, he left her to her own stupid devices, and trotted away, jingling his trailing leash from floor to floor.

Barbara was desperate, and with a grim determination to catch Benjamin and administer discipline, she picked up

a tiny birch switch from the piazza floor, stripped it of leaves, and then swung herself lightly over the broad sill, and stood within the house, calling sternly:

"Benjamin! You wicked dog!"

Benjamin heard her, and rushed back with leaps and bounds, convinced she thought better of the mice proposition; but when she tried to seize his collar, he dodged her cleverly, running up the stairs to the first landing, where he wheeled and faced her, his bright-red tongue hanging out of his mouth, in one beatific smile.

"Benjamin! Don't you go another step!"

Benjamin went another step, and another to the second landing, turning to challenge her in a very ecstasy of glee.

Barbara looked about her, dismayed, and fearful of discovery. If the owner of the house should appear at this critical moment, he could only attribute her intrusion and that of her incorrigible dog to common, vulgar curiosity. She shrank back a step or two, as though to go out again and wait on the piazza, but this room wherein she stood was arresting, and its personality held her in its spell.

There was no sound but the patter of Benjamin's feet and the jingling of his leash, as he trotted about from room to room overhead, above the raftered ceiling. Yet out of the stillness the soul of the house spoke to her in a familiar voice, and she listened, unstirring.

With a prescience that thrilled her mysteriously, she looked about her timidly, reverently, as though she stood in a holy place, albeit this was only an unfinished, empty house, wherein her naughty, runaway dog was hiding.

What would *she* be like, the woman who would hang the kettle on that crane in the wide chimney, when all this was finished? What book would she take from the shelves that flanked the fireplace, just to snatch at a bit of until the kettle steamed, and gurgled, and sang? "Wild Wales"? What a place for a shelf of Borrow! And "The Compleat Angler," and "Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine," and D'Artagnan, and Jane Austen, and Maeterlinck, and—Bar-

bara's heart was throbbing with the excitement of filling those shelves with her books as fast as the feverish hands of her imagination could select them. She laughed at the simple absurdity, and returned to the stern necessity of calling Benjamin in threatening tones. But Benjamin was at an upper window, barking at three little cedar waxwings, sitting in a precise line on the wide-spreading branch of a pine tree, and of course gave not the slightest heed.

The windows were fitted with wide seats, inviting cushions. Should they be green or wood-brown, Barbara questioned, while her fancy decided upon rose-crowded chintz. From where the stairway turned to the upper floor, two broad, hospitable steps dropped to the long dining room, one end of which was a piazza that thrust itself into the heart of the woods. The dividing doors were diamond-paned, folding back against either wall, like a screen, and Barbara knew, although they must close to the storm, they would never shut from sight the friendly trees. Here the fireplace was bricked, flat green, and in the oak panel below the mantel were letters, freshly cut, and spelling a quatrain, the words of which were blurred dimly from where Barbara stood.

She leaned forward, straining her eyes to see clearly, and then suddenly recalling herself, turned and fled to the window through which she had entered. What right had she to read the message written for the woman for whom the crane was waiting in the fireplace, and who would read "Wild Wales" while she waited for the kettle to sing?

It was desecration, this act of hers, Barbara told herself, and in that humiliating moment she forgot Benjamin. But it happened to be the psychological moment when Benjamin remembered her. Breathless from the exciting chase he had taken all over the place, and the tantalizing indifference of the waxwings, he came running down the stairway, and jumped into Barbara's lap, creating another moment of suspense, when Barbara held him uncomfortably tight, and swinging around on the window sill, jumped lightly out into the open.

"You're a nice dog to play blind lady with!" she told him indignantly, as they ran down the hill to the road again.

Benjamin trotted along with little, quick steps, and indifferent manner. It was quite her own fault if she did not like it up there; he had a ripping time, although he was panting with thirst, and was glad Barbara was not too displeased with him to pull him past the artesian well by the roadside. He refreshed himself greedily from a basin, put there by some children for the birds. He lapped noisily, wishing the birds might come along, and see him drinking up all of the water. He was not going to leave a drop. He was in fine fettle once more, and walked with head up, stub tail up, ears up—every nerve strained eagerly for something to appear.

It was a cat. A soft-footed, sly, supercilious cat, with a bushy tail, stood upon the stone wall, with arched back, and hissed at Benjamin. Hissed! Of course, Benjamin did not wait for Barbara to come, too. Indeed, she did not see the cat, until Benjamin tore the leash from her fingers, and made one mad dash for the insolent thing.

The cat dropped to the meadow, and ran; Benjamin took the tumbled stone wall in a leap, and chased the cat toward the river, while Barbara, in a panic of fright and fear, followed the wagon road into the meadow grass, stopping now and again to assure herself nothing terrible had happened yet.

Nothing of any kind happened, until the cat slid under the tent, through it like a flash, out on the other side, and on toward a fisherman's shack on the water's edge. Close upon the heels of the cat, Benjamin followed in hot pursuit to the spot beneath the tent where it had vanished. There he flattened himself with an angry yelp, and slid under the canvas. Barbara ran around to the other side, stooping low to seize him when he should come out scenting the trail.

But Benjamin did not come out. Something had stopped him in his mad career, and Barbara waited anxiously, breathlessly, fearful of what might be going on inside the tent. There was a



"Son! Let your sister alone!"

terrible commotion, after the noise of some shock, wherein shouts and variegated syllables rose above the crash of crockery and the creak of the ridgepole.

Obviously, a man lay in this tent asleep, when a cat, perfectly wild to all intents and purposes, ran across his body, chased by a dog as mad as possible, whose leash caught in his belt. The dog, infuriated by the interruption, rolled the man from his cot, and in the struggle a pitcher was broken, and other things happened, and were said, which Barbara could only hope were not as bad as they sounded.

Then there was the shock of sudden silence. Barbara listened, trembling with fear, lest Benjamin was hurt or unconscious. She ventured a timid, "Oh, Benjamin!" but the faint call was lost in the depths of a voice within the tent, pronouncing incredulously:

"B. F.! B. F.! Why, Biffie, old boy! How very careless of you!"

There was only one person in the world who called Benjamin B. F., or the more intimate "Biffie," and the sound of his voice made Barbara's heart throb sharply, while her eyes blurred, as though the meadow were whirling around into the sea, and she with it.

She heard Benjamin's leash dragging about over things, as he jumped around the tent, indulging in every expression of wild delight and joy that he knew. Evidently his long-lost friend was having difficulty in holding his own against Benjamin's caresses, because he said:

"There, there, Biffie, old boy; I'll take your word for it. Here, let's drop this beastly chain! There! Now, let's see if there isn't a nice juicy chop for Biffie!"

In the silence of the moment, Barbara knew they were going through the refrigerator together.

"Here we are! The—nicest—chop!"
Another silence, broken by the closing

of the refrigerator door, and the pad, pad of Benjamin's feet as he cast about for the best place to eat his chop.

Barbara turned away quietly, walking on tiptoe through the long meadow grass, hoping to gain the road undiscovered. In her heart she knew Benjamin had forsaken her for a chop, and it would be futile to call him, even if that had not been impossible, now that she knew the voice of the man who was camping in the tent. If she should call Benjamin, would the man in the tent know her voice? And was Evelyn Stokes going to live in the house on Star Point?

She was all but running now, with burning cheeks, and feet that hardly touched the road, as she hurried along the hedged highway, across the meadow, and through the woods to the cottage.

The launchers were just docking, and she listened courteously but without enthusiasm to the day's adventures. Her own mind was distraught, trying to arrange some perfectly simple and natural explanation accounting for Benjamin's absence from the family circle.

Before she could decide upon any version of the story her brother spoke suddenly, and with alarm in his voice:

"Where's Pups?"

"Yes," her father repeated; "where is the dog? I knew something was missing."

"He," Barbara answered, with affected indifference, "he chased a cat through a man's tent."

Brother stared the wide, loud stare of younger brothers.

"What!" he shrieked. "But where is Pups?"

"He's in the tent, of course."

"Oh, come across, Bab, what's happened to Pups? By George!" Brother reached for his cap. "If any blooming smart Aleck is keeping him for a ransom——"

"Oh, no, no!" Barbara spoke with nervous haste. "He doesn't want a ransom, I'm sure. He'll be kind to Benjamin," she added weakly.

Mrs. Woodson heard tears in her daughter's voice.

"What is it, dear? What man? What tent?"

"The tent is down by the river," Barbara spoke with the firmness of exasperation, as though Benjamin had been enticed into tents by strange men every day of his life, "and the man is the one who is building the house on Star Point!"

"Why, why——" brother gasped, then dropped back into his chair, and collapsed with shouts of laughter.

Mr. Woodson grasped the situation more slowly.

"Didn't we hear to-day that man's name is Bryce? Could it possibly be Ivan?"

"It sounded a little like his voice," Barbara confessed, whereupon brother yelled a brutal yell, and Mrs. Woodson said sternly:

"Son! Let your sister alone!"

Mr. Woodson looked his utter bewilderment.

"What's the excitement?" he asked curiously.

"Nothing, sir, nothing," brother blurted, purple-red in the face, and suppressing a whoop with difficulty, as he fixed his eyes torturingly upon his sister's flaming cheeks.

After supper he said he was going for Benjamin.

"Which way are you coming back?" Barbara asked.

"Oh, along the chickens' boulevard. The blessed idiots'll be roosting by that time."

In the tumult of her inner consciousness, Barbara had but one distinct impulse, and that was to run away and hide, like a child who is shy or afraid of what is in store for him. She pressed her fingers to her lips lest she cry out begging for time, as she saw all the lines of her life drawn down to the tight little knot of that moment, holding her helpless. Or was it the capers of Benjamin that had wound his leash about her feet so that she could not move from the spot, even though she knew the truth about everything was surely coming nearer and nearer?

Whatever the truth might be, she was pitifully unready to hear it now; some

other day, perhaps, she would listen. Her brother's tormenting delight in the situation also made the impulse to get away all but irresistible, and when she suddenly realized with a shock that he might bring Ivan Bryce, as well as Benjamin, back with him, she hesitated no longer, but slipped away unnoticed to the wood trail on the ledge behind the cottage, where the enveloping shadows were soft and thick.

Swiftly, over a dimly traced path through the bracken, she left the trail, and parting the tangled undergrowth, or stooping beneath the low-branched pines, she came to her "secret place" in the heart of the sweet-smelling forest, where stood a great, gray rock. Early in the summer, she and Benjamin had spent a very busy day making a bench against the rock, and pulling a moss-grown log about for a footstool, and here she came with her book, or her dreams, or nets to mend. It was here—she remembered it now whimsically—that she wrote that letter to Mabel Houston, six pages on the beauty of nature.

It was here that Benjamin found her, an hour later, in the deeper gray of the evening. He only knew the trail, and followed unerringly. Straight out of the path, like a streak of light, he shot through the shadows, and leaped the bracken, into her arms.

"You naughty, naughty dog!" she exclaimed, hugging him, as he licked her hands and ear in the excitement of delight.

"Oh, Benjie! Benjie!" There was a catch in her voice as she moved along, and helped him balance on the log beside her. "Whatever have you done now, doggins? You jerked the blind and hungry lady into all sorts of danger, and then ran off and ate chops, and she ran against—something cruel and sharp—and hurt herself!"

No dog could be sorrier than Benjamin was at that moment. He rolled his eyes sadly, and laid his head on Barbara's arm, gazing into her face to see if the hurt was making her cry.

"That's all right now," she told him gently, with her cheek close to his brave

brown ear. "That is quite all right now, only you know it is very difficult for blind people to know where to step, and where to——"

"Biffie!"

There was a snapping of twigs in the path, and the voice that called came from some point in the nearest shadows.

"Biffie!"

Benjamin leaped to the path, and danced about Ivan Bryce, who seized the leash skillfully, and was thereby dragged forward by the ecstatic dog to Barbara, who sat perfectly rigid on the log, staring with wide, frightened eyes into the path before her.

"I'm so sorry—the path's hard to find—I didn't know——" Barbara stammered, and no one knew what she was trying to say. It made no difference, because Ivan Bryce lifted her to her feet, and caught her in his arms, and kissed her mouth until she could have spoken no word, even if she had known what she wanted to say.

Benjamin was enchanted. Whatever happened just then was a good game, he was perfectly sure, and although he was not in it, he ran around and around the big, gray rock all by himself, just to prove that he understood.

Then he stopped, panting, and stood looking up into their faces, alert, waiting for a word. No one spoke to him, and he frolicked up the path and back again. No one saw him do it, so he snatched Ivan's cap from his pocket, and ran around and around in a silly circle. No one cared about the cap, and he caught the end of Barbara's light scarf, dragged it from her shoulders, and ran away with it quite out of sight. No one followed, and he came slowly back, trailing the chiffon through the dirt.

It was no use. He would go home. Suddenly he was the sleepest dog in Maine, and he trotted away with his neat, little pit-pat steps around to the cottage.

"Hello, Pups! Three's a crowd, eh?"

Brother lifted him into the hammock, where Benjamin turned himself around

and around until he was perfectly comfortable, and instantly fell asleep.

Barbara was dimly conscious of wanting to know things. Questions rose vaguely in the back of her mind, but she could not drag them past her lips. There they were stopped, thrust back by impetuous lips pressed against hers, murmuring brokenly:

"Bab! Mine!"

"Yes! Yes! But the words above the hearth—what are they?" she whispered finally.

Deep in the shadows of the trees, a

white-throated sparrow sang in his dreams, and Ivan answered the question:

"While seasons come
And tides do flow,
Oh, bless true love
In this hearth's glow!"

The letter addressed to Miss Mabel Houston the next day ran:

DEAR MAB: Ivan and I are to be married in the village church, after the morning service, one week from next Sunday morning. Forgive six pages on the beauty of nature.
Yours faithfully, BARBARA WOODSON.
The Cove, August fourth.



Minnelied

TROUBADOURS and minstrels fair, minnesingers debonair,
Masters of the gracious phrase, in the ancient, knightly days,
By the lute and by the lance! By the dames of fair Provence!
I can understand full well all the beauties you would tell.
Bid me welcome! Make me free
To the jongleurs' company!

Through departed Time's soft haze, I can love the eyes you praise,
Feel, through all the misty years, all the laughter, all the tears.
Loveliness that shimmering went, coquetry and merriment—
These are mine, I share them still. All the magic, all the thrill
In a deathless rondel rings—
Masters of the trembling strings!

Castles fall, courts pass away, gone are kings of yesterday,
Queens and knights, a glittering throng, fade—still lives the ancient song.
Still the blue within the skies, still the witchery of eyes,
Still Adventure comes apace, still Romance directs the chase—
I have found them all, complete,
Newly born in Marguerite.

LAWRENCE HADLEY.

The Joy Bringer

A STORY OF THE PAINTED DESERT

By Grace MacGowan Cooke

Author of "The Power and the Glory," "Huldah," "The Return," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBT. A. GRAEF

CHAPTER XIV.

CLIFFE found, with a sense of wonder, the life of the city quite unchanged, the routine of her hotel going on just as it had done. Counted by days, the time was short, but it seemed to the girl that she had lived more than one lifetime since she and Heath left St. Louis together. It was curious enough to hear Edna still talking of the same plays, and laboring to achieve the same effects in her toilets.

Mrs. Boaler received her beautiful young cousin, now a woman of means, with tremendous enthusiasm. The trunk of clothing was some little time in following Cliffe from Oraibi, and that time was put in purchasing what Mrs. Boaler called "a swell outfit." When the baggage came it was both trunks and the bundle of Schaum's pictures.

These affected Cliffe powerfully; the haunting thought of her husband, of her broken ties, came to be incessant with her. Edna's discussions of the matter were well-nigh intolerable. One day she made inquiry concerning the other woman, who was the only reason she could conceive for Cliffe's return.

"Had Heath Crittenden an Indian wife?" She put it bluntly.

"I don't know," Cliffe replied in a low tone.

"You don't know?" echoed Edna Boaler interrogatively. "Do you mean to say that you went out there to Oraibi—or whatever it was—and lived there for

months, and never found out whether there was another woman?"

Cliffe stared helplessly, dry-lipped, dumb. There was such a world between what an Edna Boaler could imagine and the tragic fact. Her cousin returned the gaze for a moment in silence.

"Oh—never mind—you needn't answer that. I understand. If you'd rather not tell me, it's all right," she broke out suddenly. "I suppose there were children; that's what put the crimp in you. Well—it does in me. You know Jack's divorced wife and her young uns—I wake in the night sometimes and think about Jack's children—that aren't mine—and I wish I was— Good night, Cliffe. It's a funny old world."

Edna was gone. Cliffe stood long after her departure staring into the glass; she was making her toilet for the night. The brush moved mechanically; her slim, skillful fingers separated the dark strands and wove them into a plait. But she did not see her own white-robed figure in the glass, the lighted room behind it, nor hear the clanging of the trolley in the street below, the indefinite hum which comes up from the ways of a great city. Before the eye of her spirit stretched a vast level rimmed by jagged, strangely cut mountains, roofed by the full dome of the sky. This was successively drowned in shadow, whitened by snow, revealed in tawny wastes and blue distances; as the sky above was sunlit, stormy, or offered the gulfs of night, star-netted, moon-smit-

The first installment of this story appeared in the July number of SMITH'S.



"You don't mean that you'd go back to Oraibi—now!"

ten. Her bedroom, with its complexity of modern conveniences, of space-saving devices, was replaced by that long apartment carpeted by Navaho rugs and Indian tanned hides, tapestried in fabrics of barbaric weave. The door was open. The keen wind came across the desert and touched her cheek. Voices spoke to her spirit, bidding her rise and follow, telling her to seek and know. She looked through the door and saw Tereva's form against the night, the violin cuddled under a brown cheek, the bow on the strings wailing the ancient urge of the suitors' song.

She came back to the hotel room like a sleeper awakened. These seizures were becoming incessant; and the pangs that went with them were as those of death—or birth.

One morning, a week later, she was

tearing off a bit of paper to wrap around a package for her laundress, when the word "Hopi" caught her eye. There was but this one word in heavy, black-faced type, evidently part of the heading of some item which she had thrown away. Strangely disturbed, she ran to the wastebasket to find it. The maid had just been in to clean the room, and the basket was empty.

Down the hall she flew toward the elevator, hurried to the servants' part of the hotel, and, her eagerness mounting with each check, recovered after a prolonged search a soaked, soiled bit which matched the torn piece in her hand. She set them together, read, and returned to the apartment with so pale a face that Edna somewhat softened the reproach that had been on her lips.

"Well, for goodness sake, Cliffe!" she cried. "Where have you been? We've been looking everywhere. I rang up over the phone to see if you'd gone down to the store.

Dacey wasn't sure about your clothes, but I gave her those that were on the foot of the bed. I hope it's all right."

"Yes—no. Never mind," Cliffe replied. "Edna, I wish you'd help me pack my trunk. I've got to go back to Oraibi as fast as I can. I won't need many things. Just the rough, heavy wear."

She had plunged into the bedroom, and spoke the last words from the depths of a closet where she was pulling down garments and flinging them over her arm. She felt a sudden touch on her shoulder, and turned to look into Edna Boaler's face.

"What's the matter with you, Cliffe?" demanded Edna once more. "Is it—you get a letter?"

"No—I saw something in the paper. There—read it."

Mrs. Boaler took the crumpled, moist

scrap and carried it to the window, settling her eyeglasses in place. When she had read the paper fluttered unnoted to the floor, while she ran across to grasp Cliffe's shoulder and shake her with the urgency of one attempting to wake a heavy sleeper.

"You don't mean that you'd go back to Oraibi—now!" she shrieked. "Why, that paper says that the smallpox had broken out in Hopi just as it did in Zuni last year. Didn't you notice that it said all the white people were in Keams Cañon, and that they had a strict quarantine, and that the Indians were dying like sheep—of starvation, and the disease, too. You can't go back there. Heath wouldn't want you to."

"Edna, do you know where my heavy gray sweater is?" Cliffe inquired, methodically folding and laying in the bottom of her smaller trunk such articles of wear as she required.

"Cliffe—Cliffe Crittenden, are you crazy?" ejaculated Edna. "I tell you, a man like Heath takes his chances in such a country as he has chosen to go into, but a woman of your sort risks more than her life. What could you do for him if you were back there, even if he had the smallpox?"

Cliffe was barely beginning to hear what the other woman said. In a dim way it occurred to her to reply that a wife's place was with her husband. Then memory of Heath's face when he had taunted her—"Are you my wife?"—swept all other considerations from her mind. She must go back and make that right.

She came to herself to find Edna Boaler indulging in something which closely resembled hysterics.

"I talk and talk to you," Edna was vociferating, "and you don't hear a word I say. A man can have smallpox, and get well, and be all right; but a woman's ruined for life. Oh, to think of anybody taking such a complexion as yours into a smallpox epidemic! There are women right here in this town that would pay a hundred thousand dollars for your looks—and here you talk about risking them as though they weren't worth a cent!"

"I'd rather you wouldn't talk, please," Cliffe remarked in a low tone. "It won't make the slightest difference, Edna—but I'd rather you wouldn't."

"Well, at any rate, do wait until Jack gets home," Mrs. Boaler urged at last. "He'll be in day after tomorrow, and then he'll—he might know some one that was going, or—anyhow—wait."

"Get me the time-table, will you?" Cliffe begged with the ghost of a wan smile on her pale face. "Be a good girl, and hunt up the first train I can take."

And this is what Edna Boaler came down at last to do. With tears dripping off the end of her nose, she studied the time-table capably, rejected a train which would be slow, found characteristically the very best route and the very best time of starting. They rode down in the cab together, Edna quite subdued, clinging to Cliffe, and weeping.

"Don't cry," Cliffe offered consolation mechanically, when she remembered to note the other's grief. "Edna—Edna—don't you see this is my chance? All my life I've demanded things and dragged them away from those about me. I couldn't see that it's not what you get but what you give that counts—and that is truest of all in love."

Mrs. Boaler shook her head, and sniffed.

"Oh, I know it's big, and fine, and splendid of you," she moaned; "but I can't help thinking about your complexion, and how awful it will be to see Cliffe Crittenden all pockmarked up. I don't think any man's worth it."

"Maybe no man is," Cliffe debated, with a pitying little smile; "but one might do as much as that for the saving of one's soul. Heath doesn't need me—I need him."

It was a nightmare journey Cliffe made back to the Hopi country. She had the sensation of being surrounded by phantoms, of struggling with them, of sometimes prevailing, so that their inhibitions swam away from her, and she was left alone in vast spaces where there was but her own soul to question or sustain. In these hours of futile

hurry when she could hasten nothing, of anguished delay when she might have gone forward had not her own strength given out, it was as though she lived through the sorrows of a lifetime.

Yet, at the end of it, when the railway once more left her on the threshold of the desert, she seemed to herself to have grown, to have strengthened. She had that feeling toward her life's mystery that children voice when, in their game of hunting hidden things, they cry out to the blindfolded one that he is getting warm. She felt that she approached the heart of her mystery.

This, when she was at her best. At her worst, she dropped to a sort of panic, a terror in which it seemed to her she must die if her return proved too late, her atonement futile. She had a word to say to Heath, she had that within her clamoring for expression which whispered that it would have walked the knife-edge bridge to the other world to follow and find him. Oh, she must not be too late!

She was delayed, held back, told that both Ballard brothers were dead of the pestilence, but still she held her way, bought her supplies, hired Indian teams, and at long, long dreadful last they drew in to Oraibi—a strange, silent, smitten Oraibi. She found a young fellow in charge of the school buildings at the foot of the mesa, the only white person in the settlement, overworked, dismayed, but standing pluckily to his task. She brought her supplies, and turned them over to this lad, who had been a clerk at the agency at Keams Cañon, and who was trying to get a makeshift diet kitchen established. She talked to him in the road before the buildings, asking him to see to drivers and team, and to sort and house what she had brought.

"It's food they need more than medicine," he said, "food and nursing. When they get too weak to drag that stone over the corn and grind the meal there's nothing left but to starve."

"If—when I find whether Mr. Crittenden is here or not"—Cliffe hesitated with eyes of fear—"I may call on you for supplies."

"Of course—of course," the young

man said. "We'll be glad to do anything we can. But—you know, it isn't reasonable that your husband's anywhere about Oraibi—living—and I've heard something of it, Mrs. Crittenden. It's true I've only been here three days, and I haven't got a chance to make any visits to the mesa yet—Charlie's been making the rounds of inspection and reporting to me, and I send the stuff up by him, but I think he'd have told me."

Cliffe pinned a desperate faith on Indian secretiveness, the unlikelihood of their volunteering information which had not been asked of them.

"Did—have you made any inquiries?" she faltered.

"No. We have no record of Mr. Crittenden here, and I supposed he went out when you did," the tired-faced lad answered. "The school-teacher nailed the store up before he was taken. Mr. Crittenden must have been—already gone, then. Perhaps he went out by Flagstaff or Holbrook. I know he didn't go by Keams Cañon, for I was there."

The dread in Cliffe's mind took on a face of certainty. She looked around her at the village, deserted, covered with patches of melting snow, a dead thing in a ragged winding sheet.

"I came by Gallup, and, of course, I telegraphed to the other places along the line," she said nervelessly, yet still persisting. "Nobody knows of my—of Mr. Crittenden's having gone out."

"Maybe he didn't," agreed the clerk, wearily turning back toward his work. "It's dreadful—this cold. If we were having seasonable weather, we could stamp the smallpox out in a week. Are you going up on the mesa, Mrs. Crittenden? Aren't you afraid? Well, if you go up, would you mind making a report to me when you get back?"

It seemed to Cliffe that the man's voice came to her from a long way off. Obscurity closed in about her. She was unable to see as he left her. Amid the deepening blackness she felt a touch on her arm. She started, gathered her forces with an effort, and looked around into the sightless face of old Weepala. The woman's blindness had

come to her from this scourge. She was now immune, and formed a link between those at the foot of the mesa and the smitten dwellers at the top.

"Cleefe?" she breathed, reaching up to touch the girl's face. "Charlie says Cleefe come."

She said no more, but mutely made signs that Cliffe should accompany her, and the girl, her throat aching, her knees trembling, fell in behind.

There were no children playing before the school, no cheerful signs of life around the dispensary or the field matron's quarters. Both of these officials had been stricken early in the epidemic, and were now convalescing at Keams Cañon. At first Cliffe made no attempt to talk to the blind woman, who led straight for the old pueblo on the mesa. With what strangled emotion she looked up at it—Oraibi, reared upon its cliffs, the dry lips of the desert sucking at the foot of its stone stairs. There had been her home for some strange weeks—some months—that seemed like years. She wondered if mention of the names of those she sought would bring response from Weepala. She would try it.

"Heath, Schaum, Tereva, Paqua, Nutoh?"

Slowly, chokingly, Cliffe told them over. At each the old woman nodded, or spoke, sometimes a long-drawn "Oo-ee!" the syllable

ble fainting on the in-drawn breath, as Hopi women so frequently utter a depressing or unwelcome statement.

And all the way up that climb she rang the changes on those names, and at one of them Weepala said: "Moki."

"At Tereva's house?"

"Ooo-ee."

"Long ago?"

"Oo—ee—oo-ee!"

Cliffe tried not to break down completely. She would not turn back. They were nearing the top now. Weepala stretched out a hand, and laid it on Cliffe's heaving side, then in mercy for the white woman's exhaustion rested on the steps. Cliffe repeated her pitiful list, but now she omitted Heath's name, and that of the artist came last.

"Chaum," the blind woman echoed, and smiled that wrinkled, toothless smile of hers.

When they started up the steps again she took a new direction, coming out by the sheep pens and toiling up to a little isolated hut built for the watchers who tend the drying peaches in the fall,



"She's taken great care of me," he said simply.

when all these bluffs are yellow with the fruit.

It was the hut of which Schaum had once made a picture, but now a clumsy chimney had been added, short, squat, scarce more than a heap of loose stones. Smoke hung in a delicate feather above the top of this addition, and as they reached the door and Weepala rapped upon it, she repeated again, still with that fluttering intake of the breath: "Chaum."

Then Cliffe was in a small, dark room, ill smelling, unventilated; and she became aware of a figure sitting by the fire wrapped in a blanket, and of an Indian woman grinding corn at an improvised mealing tub over in the corner. The woman surveyed them silently, but a querulous voice came from the blanched figure.

"Who is it? Come closer."

With a reeling shock of incredulity Cliffe recognized Schaum's ring on the emaciated white hand which lay against the folds of the blanket in her sight. She could not speak. For only answer she went and stood before him. She looked down at him. It was Xavier Schaum—or the wreck of him. Evidently he was come to the convalescing state of the disease. The face was deeply pitted, but no longer inflamed; and it, as well as the hands, was painfully thin. As she stared, wondering that he offered no greeting, he spoke again.

"You'll have to come closer, so I can touch you—whoever you are. I'm blind."

With a cry Cliffe recoiled from the stark tragedy of the thing. Schaum blind! It was a recondite cruelty on the part of fate that she could never have thought of. She moved toward him, and reached down a trembling hand to take his.

"It's Cliffe Crittenden," she said gently. "I came back looking for my husband. I'm too late, but—I came back."

He accepted her presence with the apathy a sick man shows toward astonishing things. He got one of her hands in his own, thin, tremulous, hot grasp.

"You came back for him—for Crittenden—" he repeated. "And you got here too late—poor girl. They didn't tell me when he died—but they never tell me when any one dies. Now you're here you'll—you'll not desert me," he begged. "You won't go away and never come back again—as you did before—as all the others did!"

Cliffe saw that she was to Schaum only a more plausible vision than former figments of his delirium.

"No, no," she promised, the tears running down her cheeks.

The Indian woman left her mealing bin and came creeping across to Schaum's chair, where she crouched, her head on a level with his hand. She looked at the white girl with the cowed, hostile eyes a faithful dog shows when those of whom it might be jealous speak with the master. Cliffe saw that it was Esson-Chee. And even as he might have offered careless thanks for the faithfulness of that dog, Schaum patted the silken black locks.

"She's taken great care of me," he said simply. "A white woman would have run away and left me to die; but she's even grateful to have me living—and blind."

Weepala tugged at Cliffe's sleeve. Turning to look in the direction indicated, she was aware of a man standing in the doorway.

It was Charlie. He showed no marks of the disease, but his eye was leaden, his cheeks emaciated, and the coat of his policeman's uniform hung slack upon his gaunt figure. He came in and spoke to the artist, setting down a little tin pail of soup brought up from the mesa foot. When he left, Schaum contentedly took his nourishment, and let Cliffe accompany the Indian with surprisingly little protest. She stepped thankfully out into the keen, frosty air, looking fearfully at Charlie, knowing well that he could give her the information she desired—and dreaded.

"Mr. Schaum's almost well, isn't he?" she whispered.

"Yes," Charlie returned heavily. "He don't know that his Navaho woman give him the fever on purpose. He was

goin' to leave, and she found it out. And she got a blanket that somebody died on and give it to him, so he was down first of any of the white people. She nursed him pretty good, and he likes her for it."

She had thought to ask the man when and how Heath had died. But she could not do it. Walking between Charlie and the blind woman from the little detached hut out on the mesa, Cliffe entered Oraibi at the back, looking down the streets that had run so full of their tide of primitive life, now as deserted as mountain chasms.

At the door of Weepala's house they paused. In it stood a big man, broad-shouldered, but bent. When he turned and faced them there was nothing to be recognized of the town crier, though he answered Cliffe's greeting and inquiries by the name of Nutoh. His big, flat face, still swollen from disease, was black, so that the eyes gave little effect of seeing. He tottered as he came toward them. The great voice that had seemed to be made for the hailing of ships in a storm, that was once almost like a part of the tempest itself, was broken to a pitiful quaver as it whispered her name.

"I will tell you of those that are dead," Nutoh said to her in Hopi. "I can no longer cry from the housetop, and few are those who would listen if I did so. I go from door to door and speak to the living as I am speaking to you, wife of Hease."

Cliffe covered away from him. Her knowledge of the Indian tongue gave her the understanding that here at last she was to be told the day of Heath's death. It was strange enough to hear Hopis speak plainly of such matters.

"No—no," she protested. "Not yet. Come after a while. I'll go to my home—to Tereva's house. Come to me there."

Nutoh assented gravely.

"He was goin' there," said Weepala. "He come along with Charlie and be bearer for the body."

A great shuddering took Cliffe as the men assented listlessly, and they all

turned and walked in the direction of the house of Tereva.

They stopped in the second-story room, that place which she and the mistress of the house had made ready with haste and laughter for the major's bachelor quarters. Cliffe halted in the doorway. She saw three old women moving about a stark form in the middle of the floor, laid out on blankets. More blankets were being spread upon it as covering. They had left one white square eighteen inches above the head, and turned it down over the face.

She went forward by inches, stumbling, the Indians seeming to pay no attention to her strange manner. Her eyes were riveted on that fold of white blanket. When it was laid back she would see the face that had bent toward her, lit, illumined, with that immemorial dawn which brightens but once. She would see the countenance she had struck. She was too late. There were barriers that even love would not be able to pass. She would never be able to tell him that terror of her own swift yielding moved her to that blow. She could never say that her pursuit of him, now that she looked back on it, was revealed to her as the pursuit of one who loved deeply, powerfully, with an imperious passion, which dragged all her prearranged plans of behavior awry.

She stopped beside him. The dressers of the dead pushed aside the cover.

With a terrific revulsion of feeling she looked down—not on the beloved, alienated countenance of her husband, but upon the features of Tereva.

When she came to herself once more two of the women were supporting her. She continued to gaze. Disfigured, marred, she still recognized that dark face. The shining black hair was fashioned into wheels. Tereva had died unwedded. All the necklaces and ornaments belonging to her clan were fastened upon the body. The women, having bared the face, set about painting it. Cliffe stood and trembled, like one rescued from a great danger.

"She was the last of her clan," Charlie said somberly, looking down upon the dead woman. "If she'd a-mar-



The wind whipped her blanket aside and disclosed to the half-famished children in the street her burden.

ried when she was fourteen, like most Hopi girls does, there would have been children. But now she's the last one."

Cliffe remembered her own anger and contempt at the fire of Tereva's late awakened mating instinct. What sort of creature had she been who could not see the beauty and rightness of it?

A little, thin, darkened shred of a creature reared itself on its knees at the back of the room, pushed the disordered hair from before its vision, and stared.

"Don't you know me, Cleefe?" came a murmuring whisper from the blackened lips, as it crawled forward on hands and knees, too weak to walk.

"Paqua!" Cliffe whispered the name helplessly.

The small, clawlike hands went down to straighten Tereva's blankets.

"Huntewah, he's dead," Paqua said, in a sort of passionless monotone, "him

and his brothers what went to Winslow for the dynamite. They bring the sickness back with 'em. It come in blankets what they trade to the Zuñis for. Nutoh and all of 'em went to get death for the bohana—and—they—get death for themselves."

Nutoh stod stolidly and heard Paqua's avowal.

The women painting the face of that which had been Tereva pushed Paqua about, but she settled down cross-legged, and refused to be moved quite away.

"Sometimes—when she sick—she cry 'cause she break her fiddle," Paqua said. "An', before that—when Huntewah sick—he asked her one day play for him—an' it was broke."

It was so immaterial in the scheme of things—dead, buried, Huntewah, the corpse at her feet, the broken violin—that Cliffe sank to her knees beside the

blankets, and wept, the laboring women going right on with their task, the two men standing by.

"Ai! Ai!" At the sight of Cliffe's grief Paqua raised her mouth like a lamenting hound. "Charlie he say if Tereva marry they be children to the clan—but where's my man-child?"

"Her baby's dead," came Charlie's low, even monotone, that emptied, unemotional voice which people come to use in the course of public calamities. "He die a week ago. Long time, she wouldn't let us bury him."

Cliffe stayed her own sobs, and put out a hand to the little, humped, groaning creature. Thin, cracked, came the pitiful ghost of Paqua's voice singing:

"What does the owl say, baby—baby?
Out in the dark night hear him cry——"

"Paqua!"

The singer checked a moment, and looked up into Cliffe's face.

"I'm a-singin' to Tereva," the little mother said. "I singed it to Moongwe. He didn't look pretty; but by um by they come and paint his face, and he look better."

Cliffe got to her feet, shuddering and trembling. She was aware of Weepala beckoning in the doorway, of a strange, hoarse voice in an upper room calling out words that sounded like English. She followed the blind woman—step by step—and after her came the thin fluting of Paqua's voice:

"When the peaches are put to dry——"

At the doorway she looked back; the crouching woman had reared herself; some glimmer of her own woe seemed to come to her darkened brain.

"And he won't be there no more when the peaches are put to dry!" she cried. "Oh, Moongwe—Moongwe!"

CHAPTER XV.

Not for years afterward could Cliffe recall without a pang the moment of climbing that ladder in the wake of the blind woman's bare brown heels.

There came no further sound from the upper chamber. She passed close

to the parapet where Tereva had sat playing the suitors' song to the eternal stars. She crossed the platform, and saw Weepala push open the door and go through ahead of her. Then she was in the room.

It was so exactly as she had left it that it seemed to her the women with their little gifts must just have departed, that Tereva would in a moment call from that inner chamber asking some final instructions as to the packing of box and bundle to fill which the white girl had stripped these walls. There were the nail holes where Schaum's large replica of the Oraibi picture had been tacked up; beyond them was the bit of string that had held the great whirlwind plaque Nutoh sold to her. The white ceremonial blankets, with their conventional flowering of roses and green leaves—Tereva's property, once Cliffe had departed—still hung between the outer and inner chamber, and from behind them came again the cry—a hoarse, fevered voice—and now it called upon her name.

She was across the room so instantly that it seemed to her the sound actually conveyed her—put her there. She pushed the curtains aside with a strength that would as readily have torn them down. Upon the bed which had been hers Heath lay; not dead, but convulsed and raving in the delirium of that fever which is the torture of the disease.

"She would come!" he shouted huskily, and his head rolled from side to side. "She would come. The world is wide enough, God knows—but no place else in it would do her. She came here."

Trembling, checking, dreading the moment when he must surely recognize her, Cliffe crept to the bedside, and cowered there. She stared into the face on the pillow. Incredibly reddened, beneath the crest of fair hair, swollen by the disease, yet it held reminiscence of the indomitable beauty, the charm, that had captured her heart, that had led her in her own despite to follow him, to make cruel demands of him, to wound him intolerably.

As she knelt so, the blind woman deftly reached down from a beam a little earthen pot of rosy salve, the Hopi's mixture of red earth and tallow, which is his one treatment in this disease. With careful touches she anointed the sick man's face and hands.

After the first agonized shock, Cliffe watched intently. Here was something she could do for him; here was her opportunity at last. He was not dead. She had her chance to help him back to life—if God were willing.

"Who's been taking care of him?" she breathed. "Who—nurse?"

"Tereva—now Tereva moki herself—me—Nutoh—anybody."

The Hopi words were not quite clear to Cliffe, but she recognized the names and knew that "moki" was "dead."

"I'll take care of him now," she said, with gathering resolution, almost cheerfully. "You'll help me—you'll come every day, won't you? And Charlie—he come every day?"

Weepala nodded, smiling again, moving about with her old strange air of scenting the way as a blind dog might.

Charlie came in to tell them that Tereva's body was removed by the bearers. He brought a hastily scribbled note from the clerk at the school begging her, in the name of humanity, since she had risked going into old Oraibi at all, to make at least one round with Charlie and report the condition of those in the pueblo.

"You stay here, Weepala?" she questioned. "I come back pretty soon."

The old woman assented, and with one long look at Heath, Cliffe went forth with the Indian to make that round the lad at the foot had asked in the name of humanity.

That evening Charlie brought her small bits of luggage—the plain necessities of life—and she established herself quietly in the outer room.

In the long days that followed she learned the enigma of Heath. She found what had been behind his brief questions and answers, his passionate putting of her away from him. Across the barrier of death itself she had thought she might call to him; here,

with him living, in her arms, laying his head on her shoulder, he was as securely shut away from her as though he had fled to another planet. Through the void between his world and this it seemed to her sometimes that her love must speed, her urgency penetrate to that place of phantoms where he walked; that she must get through and dislodge the hateful image of herself which stepped beside his step and taunted him. It was bitter to listen to his naive, brief description of this creature of his imagination and his memory, the sick delirium of his brain.

Poor Cliffe—toiling at tasks too hard for her, surrounded by pestilence and death, giving never a thought to the life and beauty she risked—she had, from the lips of the only one who could have told it to her, a full account of the hells through which Heath had walked since first that beauty lured him, and his folly convinced him of her love.

Now, ah, now, when there was none to say it to, she acknowledged freely that her passion for Heath had been well-nigh as sudden and imperious as his love for her. Fear it was that nerved the blow she struck him; but fear of herself, and of that elemental something in whose grasp she felt it was. That night in the desert—oh, if it were to do again! She had longed for him. She wanted to give herself to him. It was but unworthy shame that he should find her too eager that made her wound him so then.

If it were to do again! There was but the nursing, the cleaning of the house, the helping those who would abate the pestilence; into these she poured the passion that tore at her heart.

No labor was too hard for her—too unsuited. She watched the night out, and when morning came left Weepala or Paqua with Heath, and went the daily round beside Charlie. An Indian man could not make the inspection and report needed by the boy struggling alone down there at the foot; things intolerable seem to the Hopi in the way of nature; the dangers of contagion are unknown to him.

Cliffe searched through the houses, finding old men and women starving on the sheepskins in the back rooms, abandoned there to die, unburied dead left where they lay, and mothers with infants they could not care for. She wrote her reports sitting by Heath's bedside, unrecognized, yet coming to be a welcome presence. She did not forget poor Schaum, worse than dead it seemed to her, creeping back to a life of darkness, a creature whose austere master passion had been love for his art.

Strange—strange—strange to leave Heath asleep, Nutoh or another neighbor in charge, to creep down the ladder with some little gift of food, her heart weeping in her bosom at the hungry eyes, the little whining cries that followed her, if the wind whipped her blanket aside and disclosed to the half-famished children in the street her burden. Stranger still to walk along the bluff edge, looking out over the great world of the desert unchanged, inexorably the same, while she, a creature with scarce memory of any other life than this, pushed open a door to find a blind Xavier Schaum pathetically, greedily glad of her coming and the food she brought, sometimes querulously complaining of the red woman, who accepted his reproofs with the humility of a chidden brute, the fathomless tenderness a mother gives a babe.

The Hopi's overmastering dread was relaxed. Death, the never mentioned, was among them, stalking through the streets of the pueblo, coming to be an almost bodily presence there.

After a time, loss of sleep, unfamiliar and unremitting labor, the grotesquely dreadful surroundings, so wrought upon Cliffe that she toiled in a dream. There were not to her days and nights—only times and times. She was aware that at certain seasons she went out with Charlie, came back, and wrote. She recognized that her patient was mending, that he seemed to know her, and to accept her as we so accept things when we come back from the borderland which is almost as the borderland of birth.

One day, to her not great surprise,

David Ballard appeared to be in the room. She thought vaguely that he must have been there some time, for he did not seem to expect any greeting from her. A terror stabbed through her heart that she was dead—Heath was dead—they were gone where David had gone. She stole close to the old man and put her fingers lightly against his cheek where the pits were beginning to whiten. She wanted very much to ask him whether they were all living or dead; but when her lips parted and moved she found that she must be saying nothing, for he did not turn his head.

She went toward the door. Somebody was coming up the ladder. She heard Heath's voice from the bed, and what he said was:

"I should have died if my wife hadn't come back to nurse me."

His wife. Heath had called her his wife. Strenuously they labored past her, those voices in which Heath had cried out upon her in his delirium—but never by that name.

She stood for a long time fumbling with that idea.

The ground under her feet had a curious, humming sound, or sensation, she could not be sure which. She wondered if the men were singing in the kiva—that used to make the ground tremble so. For what seemed ages her back had ached; now it was as though she were being torn apart by wild horses. Her head was very heavy. A man came miraculously up the ladder, and floated toward her. He was in black, and he said he was the doctor.

CHAPTER XVI.

Spring comes to the desert as love to the hard of heart—a miracle. In late March or early April the tawny slopes, the fulvous sands, are suddenly fledged with a wondrous feathering of tender green. The washes run shouting, not bank full and raging destruction, but joyous with life, silver-footed, swift, between pools that reflect the sky like a myriad of solemn blue eyes looking back to heaven. The little orchards are sud-

denly wonders of bloom, booming with bees, busy, quick with a new life which must make haste—make haste—preparing strength against the bitter, too-much-loving of the desert summer. The gnarled, bent peach trees crouch, their arms upbearing a mass of filmy, tossing pink, like brown, life-scarred mothers cradling a beautiful, new-born infancy. The eagles in their cliff nests are hatching young broods; the tiny whirling, winged life of the desert makes the air palpitant. Under all the bushes, as one passes, there is a secret rustle like a lisp of laughter, where small, bright-eyed, furred creatures slip from burrow to burrow, or seek exultantly the succulent new food.

Cliffe had come back to life as inconsequent as a baby. It moved her only to helpless laughter, when she could yet merely stare and wonder, that Heath should be taking care of her—Heath, apparently well and strong. There was always one Indian helper or another; sometimes blind Weepala, sometimes Paqua, with her scarred little face, the mischief all gone out of it, running obediently on errands, holding a cup to the patient's lips.

One day Cliffe drew her fingers across Heath's cheek, and said interrogatively: "Scars?"

"Not many," returned the young man carelessly. "That was the trouble with some of the cases; the fever ran up, and the eruption wouldn't come out. I've got enough to mark me." And he showed her his hands.

She fell asleep while she was feebly patting one of them and calling it "Good hand," with some strange, vagrant memory of the greyhound.

That afternoon a white nurse appeared in the room, wearing a blue linen uniform and with a clean handkerchief knotted over her head in place of a cap. This person took charge of things, set them to rights, brought a bag to the bedside, and took from it comb and brush for Cliffe's hair. The patient noticed that there was no hand mirror in the bag, and that none was presented for her to survey her toilet in.

As she grew better Heath had told

her bits of news—small statements like fragments of cake, broken off to feed a very little child. The smallpox was over. Relief came the day she was taken sick. The Ballard brothers both had it, were convalescent, and gone home to Vermont. Sometimes, when he had been away, he said, on returning, that he had been over to visit Xavier Schaum.

And through it all she noted with the weak persistence of the sick that the mirror had been removed from the wall, and the condition of her face was not mentioned to her. She tried it with her finger tips. It was sensitive, but not sore, and she thought it was fairly smooth. She must have been unconscious or delirious a long time, and the sores had healed. She knew, and exulted in the knowledge, that she had offered up her poor beauty on the altar, and that the sacrifice had been accepted. Heath was spared to her. Let it go. Heath never averted his eyes from her. He never even looked at her pityingly. Let it go. There were better things—real things—in this world.

It was in these days that she came to know why she had clung to her marriage with Heath. In her first bitterness, back there in Kentucky, she had said to him that she did not know him, that she could not even guess whether or no she would like him if they became acquainted. In the light of her own action, she saw how untrue this was. She knew that between herself and the man who was her husband there had been from the first an attraction so instant, so importunate, that it could only be that voice of nature which is the voice of God. She had been taught her lesson in divers tongues. Edna Boaler had shown her that he could never be of those who disregard the real for the material things of life—which are, after all, unreal—and key their tones to a lowered, broken harmony, a discord, matching, with thrift of soul, dollar to dollar, selling what they call love, filling the sacred vessels of the altar with mere food.

From the mating of her Hopi neighbors she had learned how love is from the beginning ancient, inexorable, and

how the individual does not choose it, but is chosen by it.

Heath brought her a letter from Edna, a cablegram from the major and his bride, and a picture postal from the Ballard brothers, all in one mail. They laid the made-in-Germany reproduction of the green Vermont hills aside, read the major's brief congratulations, offered as to a newly wed pair—"Hope you're as happy as we are"—and then Cliffe took up the thin blue sheet covered with Edna's sprawling, characteristic hieroglyphs.

"She wants to know about my complexion," the patient murmured.

She read, with a thread of laughter in her happy voice:

You may as well tell me about it. I know it's destroyed, but I've got hold of a cream that works like magic. Don't know how it would be for smallpox; but it's done wonders—simply wonders—for me. There's a man here, too, who has just opened up beauty parlors and gives a facial massage that's a marvel. The sort of man you can trust, you understand. As soon as you are able to travel you must come here.

"You tell her that your husband says you don't need any beauty specialist," Heath interrupted.

"Can I tell her that? Dare I tell her that, Heath?"

Cliffe put the query eagerly, closing her eyes with a sigh of relief at his round "Yes." It seemed he didn't care at all. With that knowledge came her first pang of regret. She chided herself for it. She knew that Heath was now, and was to be, all her world. She would so gladly have forfeited her beauty to save him, and kept it to charm him!

But during those days of convalescence nothing could really touch the exaltation of her mood. She would not ask the nurse or Heath outright; she hugged the knowledge that she had paid a great price for love—one which was not utterly condemned.



Together they walked the length of the platform, once—twice.

Outside earth flushed, and warmed, and seemed to tremble beneath the ardors of her immemorial lover. The door was set wide. Old Jack came slowly through it one morning, and, after greeting Cliffe languidly, looked with solemnity in all the four corners of the chamber for Pup. It brought a choke in the girl's throat to see him.

There came finally wonderful days when the open window and door might be supplemented by a walk on the platform outside. The nurse dressed her for going out. Heath brought the great white wedding blanket of her former life in Oraibi, and wrapped her in it. He supported her, half carrying, half leading, and together they walked the length of the platform, once—twice. There was a shock of almost insupportable ecstasy to find the blue sky once more above her. She realized that the valley of the shadow may lie partly on the hither side of death. Her eyes

were hidden against Heath's neck as they passed the parapet where Tereva had sat, playing the suitors' song to the stars.

The pueblo looked deserted. The windows of its houses were like sunken eyes, or the close eyelids of the dead. The passers in its streets were few. Some children playing far down the way shouted and ran, their thin, treble cries coming sweetly on soft air.

After that Cliffe walked, first with Heath's arm supporting, then holding his hand, then all alone, each day upon her terrace.

They used to come to the foot of her ladder and call up to her—those who were left that she knew. Life was swinging back into its old groove in the pueblo. The dead were mentioned no more. Cliffe guessed them by their absence, and forebore to ask.

"I'll take you with me over to Schaum's, if you like," Heath suggested once as he was preparing to leave her. "I've got a letter that ought to cheer the poor fellow up a bit."

"I used to go to see him every day—before—" said Cliffe. "And now," with a strange little smile, "I must cultivate the acquaintance of the blind."

Her husband made no response to this, but bent to adjust the wrappings of her white drapery.

"I don't know how I shall ever get down the ladder," she laughed.

"Don't you? I do," smiled Heath, bending his head, dropping his arms about her. "There, catch around my neck, dear. I'll get you down it as the kachinas used to go—facing out—do you remember?"

She remembered. The nurse laid aside her work, and followed to see them start. Heath stepped carefully with his burden down the rungs of the ladder. He set her on her feet, and they stood a minute looking about them.

"Poor old Oraibi," whispered Cliffe. "It has been scourged."

They took it slowly, going by the trail, Heath lifting her, sometimes carrying her. It seemed so good to Cliffe to have her feet once more to earth, to feel the winds upon her cheek, that

she had an irresponsible impulse to share her bliss. Then she looked out over the matchless prospect that spreads before these mesas, and her heart failed her a bit. The man they were going to see—almost idolatrous worshiper of visible beauty—would never behold this again.

They neared the hut. Esson-Chee was outside working at a dye pot.

"I wished you will come," she said to Heath. "He feel bad to-day."

Cliffe she did not greet, though in the time when the white girl used to come daily with delicacies for the sick man there had sprung up a little vagrant kindness between the two.

Schaum received them apathetically; it was one of his days of profound depression, when he was well-nigh suicidal.

"I'm sure it's good of you to trouble yourselves remembering a blind mourner like me," he said, "but it's doubtful kindness. When I hear the voices of people with eyes—white people, I mean—I feel murderous. Why in God's name a fellow like you, Crittenden, should keep your sight, and an artist to whom He had given the gift of really seeing should be deprived of it, is one of the unanswered questions that make people say this universe is ruled by devils, or by brute chance."

"Shall I read your letter to you?" Heath asked.

"No—tell me what's in it," the blind man returned briefly.

Heath sorted the sheets, and glanced through them again.

"Well, some of your friends have got together in Canada and New York; they're arranging an exhibition of all your pictures. I wrote to St. Louis for those that went on there by mistake. It's attracting a lot of attention. The circumstances add to that. Your newspaper friends are making copy out of your misfortunes, and it advertises the pictures. They think they'll get enough to give you a small income for the rest of your life."

"Ah-h!" Schaum's groan was a sort of growl. "An exhibition in the one gallery in New York I've always wanted

to be in—and I can't see it! If I went—now—I should look like a blind beggar holding out a hat."

Cliffe looked in pity at the man's bent head and sagging figure. It was apparently impossible for him to realize the ungraciousness of his attitude. She noted the red woman's curious watching, listening air. Esson-Chee was afraid he would go away if he got all that money they were talking about. She wanted him; blind and bitter, of a race her own people would cast her off for mating with—she wanted him.

"I'm a little tired, Heath," Cliffe said suddenly. "If you don't mind, please, take me home. You can come back afterward."

"He needn't," Schaum prompted as they got to their feet to go. "I don't think I'm fit for visitors to-day. Good-by."

"I don't know that I was right to take you there," Heath said when they were once more outside. "Why should you be subjected to the annoyance of his moods? Poor Esson-Chee. She came over here from Canada way to follow Schaum. She stayed and cooked at the store to be near him."

"I'm glad I went," Cliffe replied dreamily. "I learned something."

They stopped at the foot of the ladder which led to their home; a mud hut the major had called it, in an Indian pueblo; but for either of these two henceforth that spot was home which held the other.

Nutuh came to the roof above them, and sent out a call.

"What does he say?" asked Cliffe.

"I think he's notifying the villages for the Haemis Kachina. It's coming spring now, time for the spring dances."

Cliffe leaned on her husband's shoulder, and looked up at the red-blanketed figure against the hollow of the evening sky. She listened once more to the thunder roll of that great voice. Many of the words used in connection with the ceremonies are ancient, not fully understood by those who use them, even; yet the meaning of it penetrated her soul.

"The Flute dances fall to Oraibi this year," Heath commented in an undertone. "And there are hardly enough left in both clans to hold the ceremony. I think there are only ten of the Blue Flutes, and not many more of the Gray."

"But the priests of all the kivas call for the dances again," Heath continued. "They say, 'If we do not dance, we make angry the Ancient Ones. The sickness will come back. We shall all die.'"

"Maybe some of them mind—the other—almost as much as death," Cliffe whispered falteringly. "Of course, with civilized people, it's only women that care about their loveliness. But here, when I saw them dance in the kiva, some of the young men were so beautiful; their eyes flashed so, they were as conscious and proud of their beauty as girls—even the old men were. It seemed to me—maybe they mind the other very much."

"The other—what other?" Heath wondered at her.

"This." She laid his fingers against her cheek, and studied him with pitiful eyes.

His bewilderment was so evident that she was driven to further explanation.

"You took all the looking-glasses away. Edna Boaler said to me that if I lost my looks—I lost you. It isn't so, Heath—I know it isn't so. You're kind and loyal; but—I wish—"

She broke off miserably, and stood looking down, the tears dripping over her face.

"Oh—that!" exclaimed Heath. "You poor darling! Has that been in your mind all the time? I don't know how the glasses came to be carried out. You've got scarcely a scar, Cliffe. When the fever went up, and up, and we feared for your life, we only hoped the disease would break out, and so spare you, but it didn't."

They were mounting the ladder now. She turned wordlessly and kissed the lips that brought her such news.

The Summer's Aftermath

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

YOUTH is intolerant of restraint; otherwise advice of any kind were more or less unnecessary and superfluous. Youth would rather have its fling, and pay the price afterward, even though it be in sackcloth and ashes. Youth prefers baking in torrid sunrays, burning, blistering, and browning the skin; prefers having the tissues dried out, the hair faded and bleached, and countless other disfiguring earmarks of the summer's ruthless exposure to the elements carried into the cool, crisp days of early fall; prefers all this to an exercise of restraint, having for its object the prevention of a summer's aftermath and the consequent work entailed in restoring the tissues to their former state of health and fair looks, although skin that has once been burned and tanned, and hair that has been baked and bleached by the scorching heat of torrid summer days, can never be completely restored.

We hear it said of a broken bone in which perfect union has taken place that "it is as good as new." But we know that nothing can ever be restored to its pristine wholeness or beauty; it may prove as useful, however. Still, "the flower that once has blown forever dies," and we do admire the delicate tint and velvety texture of perfect skin, as well as the beautiful luster of healthy, well-preserved hair. These are charms that fade all too quickly with encroaching years, so why hasten time with a wanton disregard of a few precautions which to youth are so irksome?

Even those who from added years of experience should know better err in this matter, and suffer with an aftermath of disfiguring blemishes from the summer's exposure to dry winds and scorching heat rays, to say nothing of

nervous troubles, headaches, and various systemic disorders that some time follow in the wake of a too intimate acquaintance with Old Sol when in his zenith. In this respect, as in a good many more, "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing"; because sun baths are recommended as health-producing, many believe that one cannot get too much of a good thing; but we can; one can get too much of *anything*.

It has been experimentally proven that even the splendidly robust suffer from nervous ills in many instances as a result of enforced exposure to heat rays. Tubercular patients are frequently retarded in their progress toward recovery by the same cause; the number of deaths and heat prostrations daily announced in the newspapers during a torrid wave is only an exaggerated example of what happens to the nervous system by prolonged daily exposure to the sun when on a harmless vacation, or in quest of pleasure or relaxation.

The effect on the eyes is notoriously bad, and they should invariably be protected. If a veil is worn, white is best, because it does not absorb heat; a large sun hat, or smoked glasses for those whose eyes are weak, should unhesitatingly be used. It has been found that cool green leaves laid well over the head and brow, as well as bound around the wrists, keep the blood cool, and are an excellent preventive of heat exhaustion.

The entire tone of the system is lowered during warm weather, and therefore no extra strain should be imposed upon it, and as little work given the great vital centers as possible. The digestive tract, for instance, cannot during hot weather manage the heavy foods we consume in winter in order that by their

oxidation sufficient heat is given out to keep the body warm. On hot days we require light, cooling, almost predigested foods that are no tax to dispose of. The many cases of "ptomaine" poisoning we hear of in warm weather are not so much the result of poisoned food as of putrefactive changes occurring in the alimentary tract from perfectly good food that cannot be quickly handled and remains to create the condition known as "auto-intoxication."

Of course, there *are* cases of true ptomaine poisoning, but the system can handle tainted food astonishingly well when the digestive tract is perfectly healthy. The ingestion of sweets—especially confectionery and pastries—should be strictly forbidden in summer. These foods are exceedingly heating, besides they are very complex and require considerable digestion before they are finally disposed of, which accounts for the number of very bad complexions one sees during the summer and early fall.

Although Professor Metchnikoff, of the Pasteur Institute, by his investigations and writings, has acquainted the world with the value of buttermilk as a health food, this fact is by no means new. The learned professor was interested in the question of longevity, and in his speculations as to the great length of life attained by the Bulgarian peasantry ascertained that their diet consisted chiefly of sour or buttermilk and black bread; other healthy peasantry in other lands subsisted on a similar diet, but failed to reach the length of years ordained the Bulgarian. Why? This fact was cleared up to Professor Metchnikoff's satisfaction; but hundreds of years ago the value of buttermilk as a health and beautifying food was well known, not only to peasant, but to princess as well.

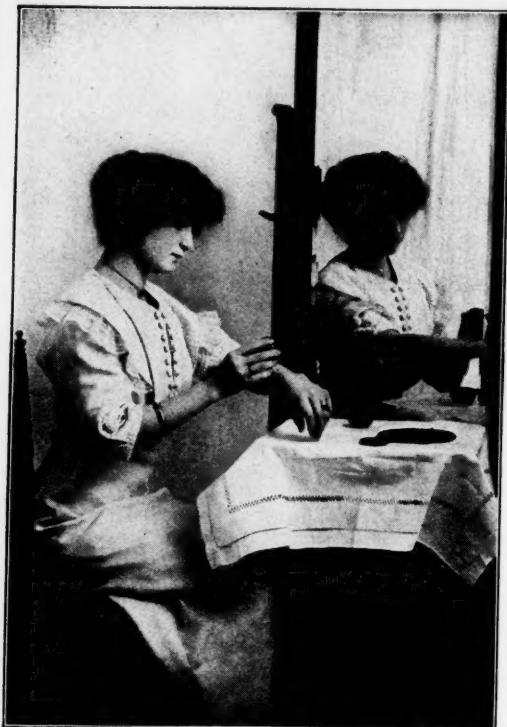
The court chronicles of the days of Marie Antoinette are filled with beauty talk; and when this exquisite but ill-fated queen chose to retire to her "farm" at Versailles and play "dairy-maid," she had a far more subtle object in view. She forsook the gayeties of the court for rest and diet, thereby to



The beauty mask antedates the use of all modern cosmetics.

maintain that peerless complexion which has been immortalized in poem as well as on canvas.

To the beauties of the French court, the external application of buttermilk, as well as its use as an article of diet, was not only well known, but "cures" were entered into in which buttermilk held the place of honor. Every night it was used as a face bath, mopped on repeatedly with a soft linen cloth, and



Pure lemon juice removes tan and freckles.

allowed to dry in; its value as a preventive of tan and sunburn was well known, also that the fat in the milk would prevent wrinkles. But these ladies did not confine their use of it to the face; the neck, shoulders, and arms were also subjected to its bleaching, beautifying influences, and to this fact is accounted the dazzling whiteness of the necks and shoulders of the French court beauties.

They even went farther, and made buttermilk their chief article of diet during these sojourns at Versailles; only at that time it was put through a mystifying process of baking, which we now know added nothing to its value except to acidify it more heavily. The continued use of this "baked" buttermilk was said to restore worn complexions to the bloom of a rose after four or five

months. We know to-day that we possess no more valuable health food, especially as a summer food, than buttermilk.

Among other simple remedies found in these chronicles is one consisting of the whites of four eggs beaten to a stiff broth with one grain of camphor and one of alum. This paste is spread on old linen, and applied at bedtime; repeated applications render the skin white and the flesh firm. It can be used as a face mask, or on the neck and arms.

The beauty mask, by the way, antedates the use of all modern cosmetics. The celebrated beauties of ancient Greece and Rome employed them, and to-day specialists resort to this method of restoring the freshness and elasticity of the skin and removing facial blemishes and wrinkles. The overnight mask is the only safe one in the hands of inexperienced beauty seekers, however, and one can be fashioned out of fairly heavy linen or cotton flannel; the paste may be thickly applied to this mask, which is then tied on the face by means of little tapes

—or it can be spread well over the face and neck before the mask is laid on. The following formula for a face paste is said to be thousands of years old, and it just as likely to be in use thousands of years hence:

Ground barley.....	3 ounces
Honey	1 ounce
White of egg, enough to form a paste.	

Citric acid enters into a number of whitening lotions; it is obtained from lemon, and for that reason this humble acid fruit forms an indispensable adjunct to the toilet table. The juice of half a lemon rubbed into the neck and arms on several successive nights, and allowed to remain until morning, is sometimes sufficient to remove a summer coat of tan or freckles. If the skin

is very thin and sensitive, dilute the lemon juice with witch-hazel water.

A Parisian beauty specialist uses this method for skin discoloration. Apply to the face at night after it is thoroughly clean:

Sulphate of zinc.....20 grains
Elder-flower ointment. . 1 ounce

Wash off in the morning with warm water and a bland soap, and daub on the following lotion with absorbent cotton:

Citric acid.....30 grains
Infusion of rose petals .½ pint

This is apt to irritate the skin, which it *must* do in order to peel it off, of course. Allay the irritation with witch-hazel water or cold cream that has a whitening effect; one containing camphor would be more valuable.

The above treatment is kept up nightly if it can be borne; if not, pursue it for several nights and omit one or two treatments, and so on. A whitening lotion that has also tonic value contains:

Tincture of camphor..... 1 ounce
Tincture of benzoin.....½ ounce
Cologne water..... 2 ounces

It is frequently necessary to use a far stronger bleach than any herein given to remove a chronic coat of tan, or that yellow, seared, withered condition of the skin that results from prolonged exposure. Here is a formula that has answered well in many cases:

Corrosive sublimate..... 6 grains
Lemon juice..... 4 drams
Bitter almonds..... 4 drams
Tincture of benzoin..... 6 drams
Sweet almonds..... 1 ounce
Cherry brandy.....10 ounces

Label *poison*, mix. Daub on the parts with absorbent cotton at bedtime, use a camphor cream the next morning.

For the eruptions that are so apt to



Soak the scalp with liquified cosmoline.

follow youthful indiscretions in summer diet, the following lotion is suggested:

Precipitated sulphur..... 1 dram
Spirits of camphor..... 1 dram
Powdered tragacanth..... 20 grains
Lime water.....1½ ounces
Rose water, enough to make 4 ounces.

This is applied at night, and bathed away next morning, when the skin should be anointed with a camphor cream.

It has often been observed by those who have lived in a hot climate for some months that the sweat glands of the face become stimulated and continue to secrete an undue amount of oil and moisture long after the cause has been removed; it is also frequently the case with many after prolonged warm-weather exposure. To allay this condi-

tion of the complexion, apply the following lotion:

Rose water.....	6 ounces
Elder-flower water.....	2 ounces
Tincture of benzoin.....	½ ounce
Tannic acid.....	10 grains

Mop on the face at frequent intervals.

The hair is perhaps treated to greater indignities during warm weather than the skin; especially is this the case by those summering at the seacoast, and who indulge in surf bathing; although others are by no means free from the charge of exposing the hair ruthlessly to the elements for days and weeks at a time, but the combination of heavy salt air and sun has a particularly disastrous effect on the hair, and doubly so when it becomes salt-water soaked and is allowed to dry thus in the hot sun on the beach. Not only has such treatment a remarkably injurious effect upon the coloring matter of the hair, but it becomes harsh, brittle, coarse, and lifeless; in fact, it is completely devitalized, and if not actually ruined requires months of constant daily care to coax it back to health and beauty.

Lemon juice is here again a valuable agent. It is well to remember this, and apply a lemon shampoo immediately after a rude exposure of the hair to brine and sun. The juice of a ripe lemon is squeezed into a bowl, upon which a cupful of boiling water is poured; when slightly cooled this is gently worked into the scalp and roots of the hair, consuming fully ten minutes in the process; while the lemon water is drying into the scalp prepare the following shampoo: Beat one egg until light and foamy, gradually add ten drops of sweet oil, and twenty drops of spirit of rosemary, beating all the while; add one cup of tepid boiled water. Shampoo the scalp and hair thoroughly with this mixture, rinse very carefully, and dry the hair in the shade. Lemon juice may be used on

any shade of hair, and it also restores artificial pieces that have been exposed to salt water and air.

In many instances the scalp has been so sadly neglected during the summer that dandruff becomes quite obstinate. In such cases no drying shampoos or lotions of any kind should be used, but everything should be done to give the roots of the hair as much oily nourishment as possible, and by daily gentle friction of the scalp coax the glands into a healthy state.

Good treatment consists in literally soaking the scalp with carbolized cosmoline that has been liquefied over a gentle heat in a porcelain vessel. Pour this on very carefully with a covered medicine spoon or cup. Work the cosmoline into the scalp, and cover the head with a soft old handkerchief or bandanna, so that the bed linen will not be soiled. Apply this at night, and in the morning shampoo with tar soap, or with green soap, and dry the hair in the shade—not over heat or in the sun. When the scalp is thoroughly dry, rub in this tonic lotion:

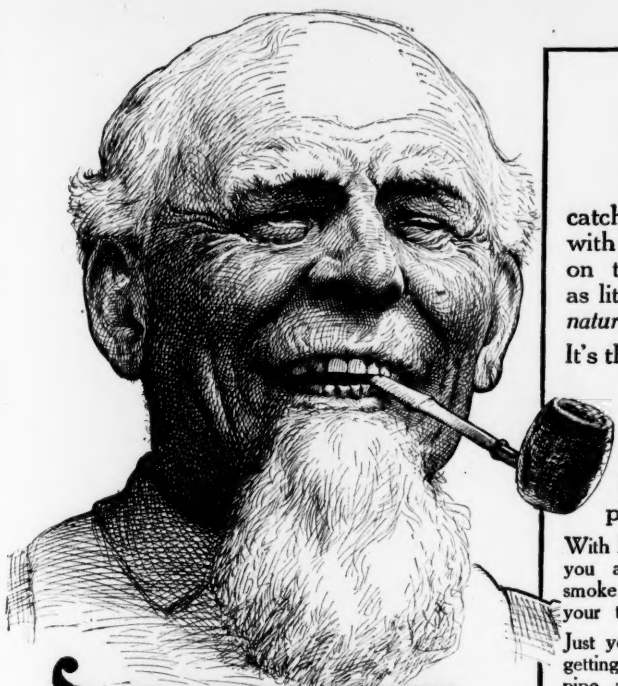
Tincture of cantharides.....	5 ounces
Spirit of rosemary.....	1 ounce
Bay rum.....	6 ounces
Olive oil.....	1 ounce

The object is to apply the tonic to the scalp and roots of the hair with persistent and gentle friction. Repeat the cosmoline treatment in a week, if necessary; in two weeks at the longest; and use the lotion faithfully every night until the hair no longer requires it. In addition, brush it long and well each day, and observe the most scrupulous cleanliness of all combs and brushes.

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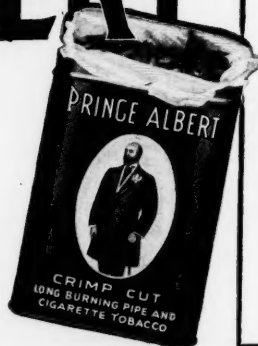


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CHICAGO ILLINOIS U.S.A.

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Broadway and 11th Street, NEW YORK CITY

HOME COMFORTS WITHOUT EXTRAVAGANCE

This famous hotel has been renovated, redecorated, refurnished, and many modern, up to date appointments have been installed, and can be compared favorably with any in the city.

THE ONLY FIRST-CLASS HOTEL NEAR ALL STEAMSHIP LINES

Within easy access of every point of interest. Half block from Wanamaker's. Five minutes' walk of Shopping District.

NOTED FOR:—Excellence of cuisine, comfortable appointments, courteous service and homelike surroundings.

THE VERY BEST ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE CITY AT

\$1.00 PER DAY UP

7 minutes from Grand Central Depot
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Also Stanwix Hall Hotel, Albany, N. Y.

MENNEN'S

Borated Talcum
FOR MINE

Prickly Heat Sunburn
Relieves Skin Irritations

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Newark, N. J.

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Cure

For Liquor and Drug Users

A scientific remedy that has cured nearly half a million in the past thirty-two years. Administered by medical specialists at Keeley Institutes only. Write for particulars

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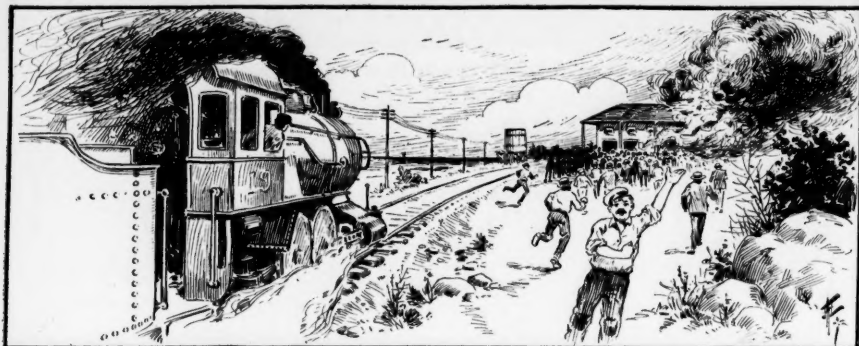
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A long complete novel of adventure in Cuba. An intense, colorful story of a young American engineer who, single-handed, fights governmental intrigue and trickery. You have read Norton's wonderful stories of the West and North, with their wealth of life and action and adventure. This story of Cuba has all their force and strength, and in addition, one of the prettiest romances you have ever read.

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All news stands
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***The September
Month - end
Popular***

Two-Year Corns

Can be Ended in Two Days

Your oldest corn—pared and doctored since you can remember—can be forever removed in this simple way.

Apply a little Blue-jay plaster. It is done in a jiffy, and the pain stops instantly.

Then that wonderful wax—the B & B wax—gently undermines the corn. In

two days it loosens and comes out. No pain, no soreness, no inconvenience. You simply forget the corn.

A million corns a month are removed in that way.

And they never come back. New corns may come if you continue tight shoes, but the old ones are gone completely.

All this is due to a chemist's invention, which everyone should know.



- A in the picture is the soft B & B wax. It loosens the corn.
B protects the corn, stopping the pain at once.
C wraps around the toe. It is narrowed to be comfortable.
D is rubber adhesive to fasten the plaster on.

Blue-jay Corn Plasters

Sold by Druggists—15c and 25c per package

Sample Mailed Free. Also Blue-jay Bunion Plasters.

(240)

Bauer & Black, Chicago and New York, Makers of Surgical Dressings, etc.

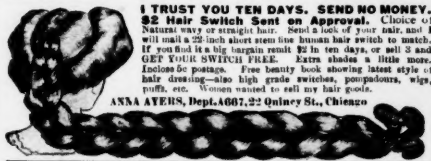
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A real rival of the South African diamond. Wonderful hardness—stands all fire, filing and acid tests. Will cut hardest plate glass. Alive with fire and sparkle. Dazzling brilliancy guaranteed to you forever.

Don't buy imitation—get a genuine gem that you can be proud of. Half ct. Ladies' Tiffany Ring, \$8.50. Half ct. Gents' Belcher Ring, \$11.00. 14k solid gold mountings. 10% discount for cash. Or either sent for free examination—not a cent to pay till you see the Maztec. (State ring finger size.) Art gem book sent free—write today

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I TRUST YOU TEN DAYS. SEND NO MONEY.
\$2 Hair Switch Sent on Approval. Choice of Natural wavy or straight hair. Send 2 inch of your hair and I will mail a 22 inch short stem true human hair switch to match. If you find it a big bargain send \$2 in ten days, or sell 3 and I'll refund the balance. Extra shades a little more. GET YOUR SWITCH FREE. Extra beauty book showing latest style of hair dressing—also high grade switches, pompadours, wigs, perms, etc. Women wanted to sell my hair goods.

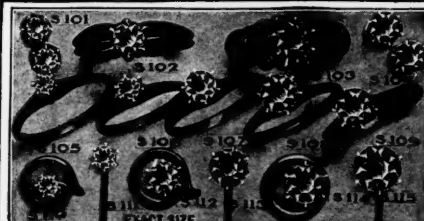
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STAIN YOUR HAIR

A Beautiful Rich Brown



Mrs. Potter's Walnut-Tint Hair Stain will do it. Just apply once a month with your comb. Will not give an unnatural color to your hair. A perfect remedy for gray, faded or bleached hair. \$1.00 at first class druggists. Send direct for a 25c trial bottle today. MRS. POTTER'S HYGIENIC SUPPLY CO., 1672 Groves Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio



S-101, Two 1-4c. dia. \$75; Compl. \$38.00
S-102, 1-2c. dia. \$45; Compl. \$50.50
S-103, 3-4c. dia. \$67.50; Compl. \$74.50
S-104, Two 1-2c. dia. \$90; Compl. \$98.00
S-105, 1-8c. dia. \$5.25; Compl. \$12.00
S-106, 1-4c. dia. \$17.50; Compl. \$21.25
S-107, 1-2c. dia. \$45; Compl. \$48.75
S-108, 3-4c. dia. \$67.50; Compl. \$71.25
S-109, 1-c. dia. \$97.50; Compl. \$101.25
S-110, 1-4c. dia. \$8.50; Compl. \$10.50
S-111, 1-4c. dia. \$17.50; Compl. \$22.50
S-112, 1-c. dia. \$45; Compl. \$48.75
S-113, 3-4c. dia. \$67.50; Compl. \$72.50
S-114, 1-c. dia. \$97.50; Compl. \$101.25
S-115, 1-1-2c. dia. \$146.50; Compl. \$161.25

Genuine Perfect Cut
Fine Solitaire
DIAMONDS \$66 TO \$97.50
World's Lowest Price and Safest Plan

\$66 to \$97.50 per carat for Genuine Perfect Cut Brilliant Diamonds of great perfection and beauty. We guarantee to buy back every diamond for Cash. We legally guarantee, in writing, carat weight, quality and value. All 14k, solid gold mountings at actual manufacturing cost. Any diamond sent for your inspection care nearest express agent or bank, at our expense. No deposit required. No obligation to buy. Full particulars of our wonderful low prices, plan and guarantees in the new complete

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L. BASCH & CO. DIAMOND IMPORTERS. S. State St. Dept. V-344, Chicago, Ill.

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FREE ILLUSTRATED BOOK tells about over 360,000 protected positions in U. S. service. More than 40,000 vacancies every year. There is a big chance here for you, sure and generous pay, lifetime employment. Easy to get. Just ask for booklet A 23. No obligation. Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

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AGENTS—ONE CENT INVESTED in a postal card will bring you a \$35 to \$60 a week proposition. American Aluminum Co., Div. 577, Lemont, Ill.

500% PROFIT—Your opportunity. Act Now. Buyers everywhere for our U. S. Fire Extinguisher. Lowest cost. Quick sales. Exclusive territory given local agents and State Managers. United Mfg. Co., 1218 Jefferson, Toledo, O.

SONG POEMS WANTED. Send us your words or melodies. They may become big hits and bring fortune. Copyrights secured. Information Free. Marks—Goldsmith Co., Desk 15, 506 14th St., Washington, D. C.

YOUNG MAN, would you accept a fine tailored suit just for showing it to your friends? Or a Silpon Raincoat free? Could you use \$5.00 a day for spare time? Maybe we can give you a steady job. Write at once and get beautiful samples, styles and this wonderful offer. Banner Tailoring Company, Dept. 704, Chicago.

AN ambitious, intelligent, responsible woman will be given an opportunity to learn our business and place herself in a position to make \$25 to \$40 weekly. Previous experience not essential but unquestionable references, energy, and willingness to work for a good future requisite. Those fulfilling all requirements will be furnished with \$20.00 worth of samples to start business with. No Deposit Required. Address with full particulars. Maison Harriett Meta, Suite No. 77D, 28 West 38th St., N. Y. City.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued.

LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE wanted. Splendid income assured right man to act as our representative after learning our business thoroughly by mail. Former experience unnecessary. All we require is honesty, ability, ambition and willingness to learn a lucrative business. No soliciting or traveling. This is an exceptional opportunity for a man in your section to get into a big paying business without capital and become independent for life. Write at once for full particulars. E. R. Marden, Pres., The National Co-Op. Real Estate Co., L 338 Marden Bldg., Washington, D. C.

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GOVERNMENT WANTS HELP. Write for list of positions open. Franklin Institute, Dep't E-7, Rochester, N. Y.

ANSWER THIS: Best side line yet. New. Pays all expenses. \$4.00 per order. Two to four orders a day sure. Pocket sample. Dyer Mfg. Co., 2005 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago.

AGENTS — Handkerchiefs, Dress Goods. Carlton made \$8.00 one afternoon; Mrs. Bosworth \$25.00 in two days. Free Samples. Credit. Stamp brings particulars. Freeport Mfg. Company, 45 Main St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

AGENTS. Portraits 35c. Frances 15c, sheet pictures 1c, stereoscopes 25c, views 1c. 30 days' credit. Samples & Catalog Free. Consolidated Portrait, Dept. 1116, 1027 W. Adams St., Chicago.

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WANTED—Local Traveling Salesmen making small towns, to handle our new, attractive, pocket sideline. Quick shipments, prompt commissions, no collecting. State territory covered. For particulars address Peckless Mfg. Co., 216 Sigel St., Chicago, Ill.

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\$3.00 PAID for the rare cent of 18-6. \$25.00 for the rare silver dollar of 1858. Keep money dated before 1890, and send 10 cents for new coin value book. A. H. Kraus, 262 Kraus Bldg., Milwaukee, Wis.

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GROW \$10,000. Raise Hydrastis. Worth \$10 to sq. yd. Sure crop. Sure market. No hazard. Plants for sale with easy can't-fail plans for growing and I buy all you raise. Chas. M. Dodge, Albany, Wis.

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HOUSE for sale cheap; 2 lots, 56 ft. front, 9 rooms and bath, all improvements, in a fine, healthy and growing section on the line of the New Bronx Valley Park, West Mt. Vernon section, 30 minutes from Grand Central Station N. Y. City. "Owner" 99 Percent Place, Sherwood Park, Yonkers, N. Y.

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Substitutes
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Send for FREE Catalog!

showing wonderful White Valley Gems in Rings (Ladies' or Gentlemen's), Scarf Pins, Studs, Brooches, Necklaces, Cuff Buttons, Lockets, Earrings—100 different articles and styles.

Not glass, not paste, not any kind of imitation, but **beautiful, splendid gems**. (White Sapphires chemically produced.)

Look like finest diamonds. Will scratch file, and cut glass. Stand acid test. Famous society women substitute White Valley Gems for real diamonds—or wear the two together confidently.

In **K. solid gold mountings**, 25-year Guaranty Certificate with each gem. Ring measure sent with catalog. Will send any article in book C. O. D.—express prepaid—subject to examination—or by registered mail on receipt of price. Money refunded if not satisfactory.

WHITE VALLEY GEM CO.,
599 Saks Bldg. Indianapolis, Ind.

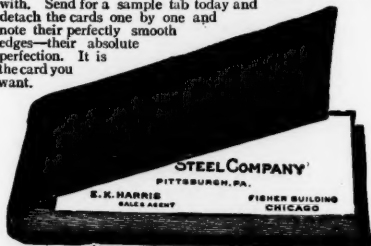


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FOR BABY'S TENDER SKIN



Use Only

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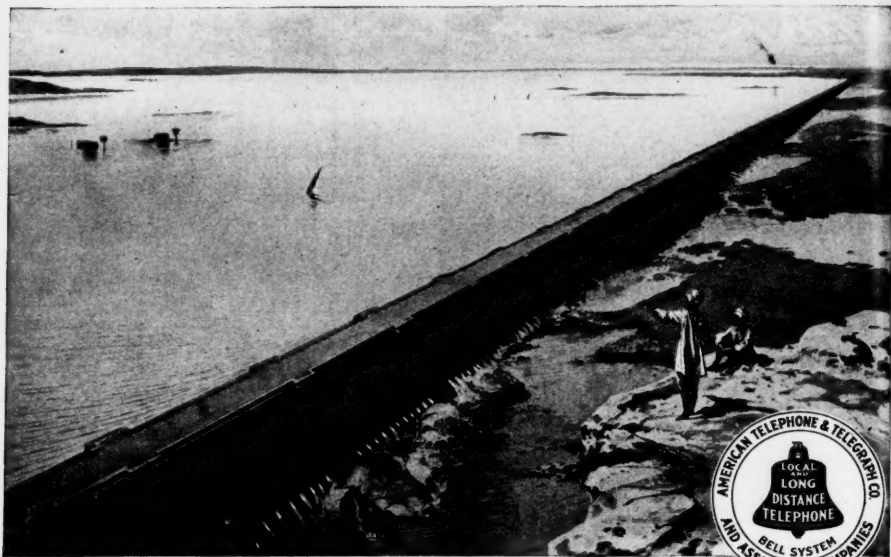
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Should shave with Cuticura Soap Shaving Stick. Makes shaving a pleasure instead of a torture. At stores or by mail, 2c.



Assuan Dam, part of the Nile system, one of the greatest engineering projects of its kind.

The Nile System—The Bell System

For thousands of years Egypt wrestled with the problem of making the Nile a dependable source of material prosperity.

But only in the last decade was the Nile's flood stored up and a reservoir established from which all the people of the Nile region may draw the life-giving water all the time.

Primitive makeshifts have been superseded by intelligent engineering methods. Success has been the result of a comprehensive plan and a definite policy, dealing with the problem as a whole and adapting the Nile to the needs of all the people.

To provide efficient telephone service in this country, the same fundamental principle has to be recognized. The entire country must be considered within the scope of one system, intelligently guided by one policy.

It is the aim of the Bell System to afford universal service in the interest of all the people and amply sufficient for their business and social needs.

Because they are connected and working together, each of the 7,000,000 telephones in the Bell System is an integral part of the service which provides the most efficient means of instantaneous communication.

**AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
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One Policy

One System

Universal Service

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The Most Exquisite New Ideas in Watch Cases



Take your choice of these superb new style watches sent without a cent down—on approval (Payable at \$2.50 a Month)

The Movement—In connection with our sweeping fight on trust methods we have selected our *finest* highest grade watch for a special offer direct to the people. **Material:** The best that money can buy. **Workmen:** World renowned experts in their line. **The Jewels:** 19 finest grade selected genuine imported rubies and sapphires, absolutely flawless. (It is well understood in the railroad business that 19 jewels is the proper number for maximum efficiency.) **Factory Fitted** and factory tested. **Adjustment:** Adjusted to temperature, isochronism and positions. The most rigid tests.

Since the \$1,000 Challenge was made to the giant factories four years ago, why have they not answered? Why have not these factories produced a watch **equal** to the Burlington? This challenge did not ask our competitors to produce a watch **better** than the Burlington. NO. If they should produce a watch **equal** to the Burlington we should be the losers. Our \$1,000 still lies in the bank for competitors to cover.

No Money Down

We ship the watch on approval, prepaid (your choice of ladies' or gentlemen's open face or hunting case.) You risk absolutely nothing—you pay nothing—not one cent unless you want the great offer after seeing and thoroughly inspecting the watch.

Burlington Watch Co. 19th St. & Marshall Blvd. Dept. 1157 Chicago

Startling Watch Offer

READ! A Watch Offer Without Parallel

Write for our free book on watches; a book that posts you on watches and watch values—explains reasons for our most remarkable rock-bottom-price offer **DIRECT TO YOU** on the highest grade Burlington.

\$2.50 a Month at the Rock-Bottom Price

To assure us that everybody will quickly accept this introductory offer, we allow cash or easy payments, as preferred. You get the watch at the rock-bottom price, the same price that even the wholesale dealer must pay.

Now Write for the free book. It will tell you what you ought to know before you even examine a watch. It tells all the inside facts about watch prices, and will explain the many superior points of the Burlington over the double-priced products. Just send your name and address today.

No letter necessary just the coupon will do.

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FREE WATCH BOOK COUPON

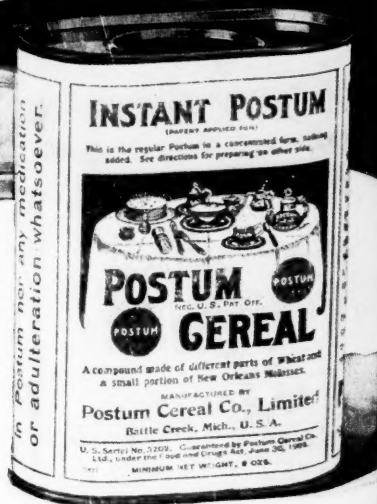
BURLINGTON WATCH CO.
19th Street and Marshall Blvd.
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The Morning Beverage *Instantly*

A cup of hot water
A level teaspoonful of Powder
and there you are



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This makes it easy for anyone unpleasantly affected by coffee to stop it and be rid of the disorders.

"There's a Reason"

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